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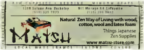
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NEWS & OPINION

LETTERS

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Keep It Clean

I never thought that restaurant reviews needed to be X-rated, but John Birdsall does a disservice by penning reviews that verge on the edge between soft porn and animated gay theater. Do we really need to know what fish paste smells like on the hands?

I mean, really?

Give us all a break, albeit even in the *Express*, and keep your hands where we can see them. After all, you are writing about food, aren't you?

R. J. Debrowe, Oakland

[illegible]

The Horse Stables Site For ...

The decision regarding location should be made based on usability and community benefit — not on how long a previous option has been in the works.

The police horse stables is a great site — we couldn't ask for better! So glad to hear community discourse on real options finally happening on this critical project!

Melissa Sherman, Oakland

And Against

It is more than a little nuts to put a bunch of barking dogs between an outdoor theater at Fairyland and the bandstand, within a no-dogs park, adjoining a bird sanctuary, and close to a tourist attraction full of little kids. I'll speak out against this one, with eagerness. I'd be happy to go to a Lakeshore dog park. I will fight putting any such use inside our Lakeside park.

Naomi Schiff, Oakland

[illegible]

Horrifying — in a Good Way

Your cover story is one of the funniest, most horrifying pieces I have seen in the pages of the *Express* in many a moon. It is finely crafted and, when one considers the subject matter, actually subtle in a way that makes it all the more powerful.

The sole area in which I disagree with Jones is actually why he should write more about Oakland. He truly appreciates what he deems are its attributes. I, on the other hand, believe the unpleasant facets Jones found in the Jack London Inn reflect in great measure that which has turned off so many of us to that ever more decrepit burg.

With superb writers such as Andrew Jones in our midst, it would be appropriate for the *Express* to publish more by their likes than to constantly recycle ideologues from the old *Berkeley Daily Planet* and KPFA, who are too fiercely rooted and biased when it comes to any semblance of accurate reportage. These PC partisans diminish what is otherwise the most decent journal focused upon the East Bay. On the other hand, pieces by the likes of Andrew Jones significantly elevate the quality of the *Express*. Correspondingly, it would be wonderful to see more of his work appear in your journal.

Dan Spitzer, Berkeley

[illegible]

Don't Blame Public Employees

Wow! Little did I know that the long arm of Scott Walker and his ilk could reach all the way to Berkeley to slap a Vulcan mind meld on Robert Gammon. The notion at the heart of "Shared Sacrifice" — that public-employee compensation is the cause of our budget woes and that therefore our budget woes should be solved by reducing public-employee compensation — is the Tea Party Kool-Aid du jour. To see Gammon drunk on it makes me want to vomit.

Public employees did not cause the recession of 2008 and the national, state, and local budget problems that followed. Bush tax cuts, two wars, and corporate greed allowed to run amok account for much of the cause for this mess. If you're looking for folks to pitch in and share the sacrifice, how about looking to all the Wall Streeters that received multi-million-dollar bonuses in the years leading up to 2008?

As for the public employees, they deserve higher compensation and better benefits. And if we can't achieve that because of the political reality we are all facing, then they at least deserve to be lavished with praise and gratitude for doing so much for this state.

Mark Vistness, Oakland

Letters Policy
Please provide your full name, address, and daytime phone number, although we will only print your name, city, and affiliation. Send submissions to Letters@EastBayExpress.com or Letters, *East Bay Express*, 620 3rd St., Oakland, CA 94607. Letters are edited for length and clarity.

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SEVEN DAYS

COLISEUM CONTRACT GOES OUT TO BID

For a while last week, it looked as if politicians were going to extend a no-bid deal with a firm that had come under heavy criticism.

Ellen Cushing and Robert Gammon

For years, Oakland's major publicly owned event venues — the Coliseum and the neighboring Arena — have lagged behind the competition, booking fewer big concerts and raking in less money for taxpayers than comparably sized venues in other cities. In 2008, an outside audit declared the Arena to be "underutilized" and "underperforming," and earlier this month the Coliseum's operators came under fire for mishandling the parking situation at a U2 concert.

Over the years, the Golden State Warriors, the main tenant at the Arena, also have heavily criticized the venue's private operator, SMG Management. But for a time last week, it looked as if the public officials who oversee the Coliseum and Arena were going to renew SMG's no-bid deal for another ten years. SMG was expected to receive the go-ahead, sources said, in part because it had offered the cash-strapped Coliseum Authority $1.5 million.

But after the *Express* broke the news about the proposed contract extension on its web site, the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum Authority — a joint city-county panel that governs the Coliseum and the Arena — changed course, and decided to open the bidding process up to other firms. The charge was led by Oakland City Councilwoman Desley Brooks, who started the discussion by stressing the need for competitive, open bidding. "For me, personally, when there has been a contract in place for more than ten years and there hasn't been a public process, it's important that we go out and do that," she said.

At the meeting, two experienced venue management firms expressed interest in the Coliseum-Arena contract: AEG, or Anschutz Entertainment Group, a sports-management company that owns teams and operates arenas worldwide, including the Staples Center; and Global Spectrum (also known as Comcast Spectacor), which manages hundreds of sports and entertainment venues around the country.

Representatives from SMG also pleaded their case for why their contract should be extended without a bidding process. They pointed to their experience running the Coliseum and Arena, and argued that they would be better at attracting concerts and other events because, unlike other firms, they're not a concert promoter and so they don't favor some acts over others.

However, critics of Coliseum-Arena management say that SMG has not been aggressive enough in attracting concerts — like a concert promoter would do — and thus hasn't had much success in helping pay off the public debt on the Coliseum and Arena. Every year, both the City of Oakland and Alameda County have to pay a total of $20 million to the authority to pay debt incurred from remodeling the facilities in the 1990s. That's money that could be spent on cops, firefighters, libraries, or parks.

The country's largest concert promoter, Live Nation, also was said to be interested in the Coliseum-Arena contract, but none of its employees spoke at the meeting. According to well-placed sources, SMG may be looking to partner with Live Nation and file a joint bid.

After comments from the three companies — in addition to those from two union representatives, speaking for the Coliseum's ushers, security staff, and custodians, about concerns regarding outside contracting — Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty seconded Brooks' motion, saying that the commission "can gain a lot by at least testing out the market and seeing if there's something else out there."

Oakland Councilman Ignacio De La Fuente began his remarks by focusing on the supposed downsides of a public bid process, but in the end, he did not object to Brooks' motion. The authority board eventually ruled by consensus to put the contract out to bid.

Ignacio, Desley, and the OPD

De La Fuente and Brooks, in particular, may also have been looking to avoid more public criticism in light of a *Bay Citizen* news story that broke the morning of the Coliseum Authority meeting. The *Bay Citizen* reported that De La Fuente and Brooks had requested and received special treatment from the Oakland Police Department after each of their cars were burglarized.

The councilmembers denied any wrongdoing, but police reports indicated that they both used their political influence to call high-ranking OPD officials to get police to respond to their problems — in possible violation of city law. In addition, the understaffed police department normally makes car burglaries a very low priority and often doesn't respond to them, but the department sent sergeants to investigate both councilmembers' burglaries.

The incidents also occurred at a time when both De La Fuente and Brooks had refused to hire more police officers than the 22 laid-off cops that Mayor Jean Quan plans to bring back. But our favorite detail was this: What was De La Fuente doing with a briefcase in his car stuffed with $1,000 in cash and twenty Rahsaan and Sade concert tickets?

Tuition Doubles at UC and CSU

California's dream of providing a public college education at a reasonable cost to its residents is now merely a distant memory in light of decisions last week by the University of California and California State University systems to jack up tuition costs yet again. After the CSU board voted to raise fees by 12 percent and the UC regents voted to increase them by 9.6 percent, both systems now cost twice as much as they did during the middle of the last decade. That's a 100 percent tuition hike in just six years.

Both university systems blamed massive state budget cuts for the latest round of hikes. This year, Governor Jerry Brown and the Democratic-controlled legislature voted to slash $650 million each from CSU and UC. The cuts and fee hikes will have a huge impact on middle-income families who don't qualify for student aid and are not wealthy enough to pay the higher tuition. Former UC Regent Bill Bagley, appointed by Republican Governor George Deukmejian, noted to the *San Francisco Chronicle* that the tuition hikes amount to "a parent tax" effectively enacted by the legislature. "It's a massive, progressive parent tax," he said.

Three-Dot Roundup

In a major victory for LGBT rights, Governor Brown signed a bill into law that requires California public schools to teach students about the accomplishments of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people throughout history. ... And the Alameda firefighters union continued to hand out major campaign donations to city politicians at a time when they were negotiating a new contract, the *Alameda Sun* reported. The firefighters donated a total of $10,500 to Mayor Marie Gilmore and Councilmembers Lena Tam, Rob Bonta, and Beverly Johnson to help them retire their campaign debts from last year's election. Those four also voted for the firefighters' new contract, which critics have derided as being a sweetheart deal. The firefighters also were the biggest contributors to Gilmore, Tam, and Bonta in 2010. ●

LEGALIZATION NATION

NEW POT CLUBS COMING TO OAKLAND

But the city council keeps its plan for large cannabis farms on ice. Plus, a review of *L.A. Noire*'s "Reefer Madness."

By David Downs

Medical cannabis patients in Oakland will likely have double — possibly triple — the number of dispensaries to choose from in the years to come, as the city backed away again last week from its embattled plans for large pot farms and turned toward boosting club diversity.

On July 12, the Oakland City Council's Public Safety Committee voted unanimously to increase the number of permitted dispensaries from four to eight. The increase was scheduled to go before the full council on July 19. During the Public Safety Committee meeting, Council President Larry Reid also expressed interest in increasing the number of Oakland dispensaries to twelve. San Francisco has 29 dispensaries, and as many as 200 groups could apply for Oakland's new permits this fall.

The Public Safety Committee also shelved plans to amend Oakland's embattled 2010 cultivation ordinance. Legalization Nation considers Oakland's industrial pot farming permit program stalled indefinitely, especially after the June 29 "Cole Memo," in which US Department of Justice Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole specifically singled out as an enforcement priority those "facilitating … multiple, large-scale, privately-operated industrial marijuana cultivation centers … [with] revenue projections of millions of dollars."

Public officials wouldn't be immune from the US Controlled Substances Act, Cole added. Federal actions could include arrest, prosecution, imprisonment, and property seizure. However, weed activists have pointed out that federal officials have never arrested a civil servant for administering a medical marijuana program.

Under amendments that the Oakland council was scheduled to consider last week but did not, each permitted pot farm would have to be in a "closed loop," growing medical cannabis only for a specific dispensary. Farms would not be allowed to exceed 25,000 square feet per location or grow more than six mature plants per patient in the collective. The amendments are based on advice from the law firm Meyers Nave. The council brought in the firm this year to offer advice after then-Oakland City Attorney John Russo refused to help the council — citing the alleged illegality of their original plan.

That 2010 plan — which included 100,000-square-foot independent farms with no grow caps — drew rebukes from US Attorney Melinda Haag and Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O'Malley. The rebukes indicated that the plan was not legal under state law, in part because it would have allowed the pot farms to sell to any dispensary, and thus would not be part of a "closed loop."

By permitting industrial cultivation, the city hopes to ameliorate some of the many hazards caused by rampant indoor cultivation. Some indoor weed gardens have ruined housing, and they attract would-be robbers. The Oakland Fire Department responds to about one fire with a pot farm on site per month.

Prop 19 campaigner and Oakland Patient ID Center operator Jeff Jones applauded the council's decision to slow down. "I do think it's great that we take this other slower track. It's worth delaying if we're going to get it right."

Dispensaries, on the other hand, appear to be less contentious, and have become a significant revenue source for Oakland — city staff considers them a success and a model for the nation. In 2010, the three operating dispensaries — one ran into legal trouble and closed — took in $28 million in sales. The city collected $420,000 in business taxes and an estimated $1,320,000 in sales taxes last year from the clubs, according to officials.

Doubling or tripling dispensary permits might not double or triple tax revenue, however. New dispensaries will likely siphon off existing clubs' sales. Harborside Health Center, thought to be the largest club on the West Coast, has about 80,000 patients, according to company figures.

During public comment, no one opposed increasing the dispensary count, though some questioned the city's opaque permitting process and its fee structure. Oaksterdam operator Richard Lee advocated for more, smaller stores, while asking the council to go easy on the taxation. Major Bay Area dispensaries are currently under audit by the Internal Revenue Service, which is seeking to disallow standard business tax deductions taken by the clubs.

L.A. Noire's 'Reefer Madness'

Calling all cars, calling all cars. The three million gamers who've purchased Playstation3 and Xbox 360 game *L.A. Noire* won't be disappointed with the latest download, "Reefer Madness." The $3.99 ninety-minute saga has detective Cole Phelps killing his way to the top of a 1940s marijuana trafficking ring. Expect vicious, stylized gun battles, foot and car chases, and boxes and boxes of rather high-quality sticky icky.

Publishers at Take-Two Interactive must be lighting cigars with $100 bills and laughing at the success of the highly praised game produced for Rockstar by Australian development group Team Bondi. The $60 title is moving briskly thanks to its masterful storytelling and cutting-edge graphics. The film-quality game also is divided into specific noir crime cases, which perfectly lends itself to serialization.

Past downloadable content for the game included sleazy Argentinean diplomats, Howard Hughes, and the Spruce Goose. But just like today, *L.A. Noire*'s vice squad doesn't stop drug use so much as manage it. And without spoiling it, the plotline echoes parts of the TV series *The Wire*, in which the pawns get busted while the big fish are suspiciously well-connected.

This particular piece of content relies less on keen evidence-gathering and interrogation than brute force. But we found ourselves newly amazed at the graphics as we poured hundreds of rounds into a warehouse office during a midnight shoot-out. Glass partitions shattered, wood paneling burst, and paper flew as we sprayed the cubicles, each round flash-illuminating the darkness like a good noir should. ●

David.Downs@gmail.com

This column is culled from our blog of the same name.

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ECO WATCH

TOO HOT FOR WINE?

Climate experts say global warming could have serious impacts on California winegrowing, particularly in the East Bay

By Alastair Bland

Winemaker John Evan Marion is counting on a career of growing grapes and making wine in the East Bay's Livermore Valley. He's spent the past fifteen years learning the craft at his family's winery, Big White House Winery, and more recently with his own label, John Evan Cellars. But as the 28-year-old scouts for ideal vineyard locations and considers what grape varieties will be the best to grow in various microclimates, he's gambling with the future.

Climate change is expected to unfurl noticeably throughout California's growing regions in the coming decades, altering rainfall patterns, creating unpredictable temperature dynamics, and making for permanently hotter weather. According to a study published in the June 30 issue of the journal *Environmental Research Letters*, average global temperatures will rise at least two degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2040 and have serious impacts on the capacity of certain regions in California to produce good wine.

John Evan Marion is shaping his winemaking business around projected climate changes.

But the report, whose lead author is Noah Diffenbaugh, an assistant professor of environmental earth system science at Stanford University, also predicts that not all of the effects from global warming on the West Coast's wine industry will be negative. "There are regions that are cold limited, like the Willamette Valley [in Oregon] that could see an increase in area suitable for growing wine grapes," Diffenbaugh said in an interview.

However, on the downside, Diffenbaugh said, California's acreage of premium grape-growing land could be reduced by as much as 50 percent in just thirty years, forcing farmers to change what grapes they grow or pull their roots entirely and leave the area. Such impacts will hit first in regions that are already on the warm side. The southern half of the Central Valley, by all expert accounts, is one such place where just minor increases in temperature could push the region over the edge, making it altogether unsuitable for growing most grape varieties.

The Livermore Valley is also among California's warmer growing regions, Diffenbaugh noted. As it is, the region is more favorable to heat-tolerant grapes like Petite Sirah and Sauvignon Blanc than it is to cold-adapted varieties such as Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. And a substantial increase in temperature could make growing the extremely popular cold-adapted varieties virtually impossible in the region — especially on the eastern side of the valley, near the Altamont Pass, where the cooling influence of the ocean is minimal.

Marion believes that climate change "will probably make a serious change in how we make wine" in the Livermore Valley. Yet he is optimistic that local winemakers will be able to adapt to the future and believes that California's winemakers could even capitalize off some level of warming. Already, Marion points out, many California wines have evolved — by choice of winemakers and demand of consumers — into high alcohol fruit bombs compared to those traditionally produced in Europe, where lower alcohol levels have always dominated the industry. "Global warming will probably push that trend even further to make bigger, even more fruit-driven wines that people like to drink," Marion said.

Another option, though far more costly and time-consuming, would be to swap out existing grape varieties for more heat-tolerant ones. Phil Wente, fourth-generation winemaker at Livermore's Wente Vineyards, among the very oldest wineries in the region, notes that hundreds of cultivated grape varieties indigenous to the warmer latitudes of Europe, like in southern Italy, Spain, and Croatia, could be introduced to California's winemaking culture if rising temperatures become a serious problem.

At Ruby Hill Winery, winemaker Chris Graves said that other heat-tolerant grapes already present in the state, like Zinfandel, Syrah, and Petite Sirah, and some Italian varieties, like Sangiovese, Barbera, and Aglianico, could give winemakers an edge — at least for a while — against warmer summers and falls. "Any of those regions in the Mediterranean that get those hot winds from Africa will have very ideal grapes," Graves said. "There's also the Douro [Valley in Portugal]. It gets scorching hot there and the grapes thrive."

Grafting new varieties onto existing vines and waiting for them to produce grapes is a costly and time-consuming process, though, meaning several years without fruit before the altered vines resume production. It also relies on the new varieties proving adequate in their new environment, which they might not. "There are these obvious risks associated with replanting with a certain grape," Diffenbaugh said. "Adaptations that don't require replanting or moving will be the cheapest."

Yet despite the expert predictions about the effects of global warming on winegrowing in California, Wente remains optimistic. "If we need them, we have lots of options to turn to for grapes that grow in those hotter areas [of southern Europe]," he said. "There are also a lot of regions along California's North Coast that haven't even been tapped because they've always been considered too foggy or too cold."

Though projections of increasing temperatures are the rule among climate scientists, growers statewide have actually noticed a recent trend of cooling in coastal regions like the Bay Area. Earl Ault has the benefit of more than two decades of record-keeping at hand, and as owner and winemaker at Cedar Mountain Winery, he said that harvest dates have become progressively later over the past two years.

Between 1988 and 1998, Ault picked his Chardonnay grapes — usually the first variety to ripen — between August 30 and September 1. But the Chardonnay harvest date has shifted further and further into September as the grapes take increasingly longer to develop necessary sugar levels. Last summer was among the coolest on record, and Ault's harvest was a full three weeks later than his historical average.

And while Ault agrees that temperatures, on average, are climbing, he doubts that climate change will be a problem for most winemakers. "If it's just a couple of degrees [of warming], I'm not sure the grapes will notice," he said. "If we need to we'll just harvest earlier."

But climate researchers disagree. In 2006, Diffenbaugh and his colleagues produced a report that took an extended look at the future of winemaking in America. In that analysis, they projected that by the year 2100 as much as 81 percent of the United States' best grape-growing acreage could be too hot to produce certain varieties of wine grapes.

Many winemakers already know the potentially devastating effects of higher temperatures. Last summer, for example, though overall a cool one, saw a short but crushing heat spell in August that scorched grapes across the state. As far north as Chico, growers lost as much as 60 percent of their crops in just several days of 100-degree temperatures. Such events could become increasingly common, according to forecasting by Diffenbaugh and other climate scientists. In his June report, Diffenbaugh and his colleagues predicted that parts of Northern California will experience up to ten additional days each summer hotter than 95 degrees by the year 2040.

Still, Marion believes that many winemakers have the skills to successfully adapt to climate change. "Winemakers, as a profession, are well equipped to deal with year-to-year variation and often have to do things slightly differently every season based on the weather," he said.

Graves of Ruby Hill agreed, noting that simple vineyard innovations could help fight the effects of climate change. Allowing extra leaf foliage on the vines, he said, can shade grapes and protect against extreme heat, as can misting the fruit with sprinklers on hot days.

"Good winemakers are adaptive," he said, though he recognizes that an unfavorable future is possible. "They'll be able to deal with changing conditions to some extent. And that'll give us wiggle room for a while, but eventually, if the warming continues, we might have to graft onto new varietals or even stop making certain wines. Eventually, there's only so much you can do." ●

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CAL STUDENTS WANT BERKELEY COUNCIL SEAT

UC Berkeley students are pushing for a spot on the Berkeley City Council either through redistricting or a charter amendment.

By Phil Gackle

Getting around Berkeley without encountering signs of student life is nearly impossible. Students study around coffee-shop cafes like Au Coquelet and Strada, eat Cheese Board pizza on the Shattuck Avenue median, and party into the wee hours of the night on college football game days. In many ways, student culture is deeply embedded within the city's social fabric. Even Berkeley's global reputation for being a beacon of liberal activism is rooted in the student protest movements of Sixties. But when it comes to city politics, students are almost invisible. "The [City Council] districts have been gerrymandered against the students — that's clear," said UC Berkeley student Senator Shahryar Abbasi. "We feel marginalized and disenfranchised because the system was built against our interests."

Cal students account for almost a quarter of the city's 112,580 residents, but they don't form a majority in any of Berkeley's eight council districts. Instead, the city's estimated 25,000 student residents are split up into four districts that encircle the UC campus. The end result is that a student representative has never been elected to city council since the advent of district elections in 1986. "We're a big part of this city," Abbasi said. "We want our voice to be heard."

Calls for the creation of a student-dominated council district are heard every decade when the city adjusts its boundaries to account for population shifts reported in the Census. And every time students run into the same problem: Their plan to create a student majority district runs up against the Berkeley city charter, which requires every district to stay as close to its original 1986 boundaries as possible. But this year, student leaders are using a different strategy.

Once classes get going this fall, they plan to move forward on two tracks: Attempt to draw a more student-oriented district that would go along with the city's charter, while whipping up support from a broad coalition of student groups with the goal of putting a measure on the November 2012 ballot that would amend the charter so that they can have a full-fledged district of their own. "This time around we're definitely serious," said Joey Freeman, a former student senator who ran for office on the promise of establishing a student-oriented council district.

The students' case is pretty straightforward: They represent a sizable chunk of the city's population, and they have clear political interests in many city issues, like housing, rent control, transportation, even zoning (the businesses they frequent require permits) — so they should have a seat at the table. "The city council deals with issues that impact us more than any other political body," Freeman said. "But instead, their voice is diluted, spread out over four districts where they lack the political muscle to be taken seriously."

The crux of the argument is that students form a "community of interest" in Berkeley, and thus, under state law should have a right to their own council seat. California law defines a community of interest as "a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation."

"They are a community of interest; it can not be ignored," said former Mayor Shirley Dean, who backed the idea of a student district when she held the city's top post ten years ago.

However, there's no doubt that the students' proposal will impact city politics. If student leaders succeed, then the most likely student majority district would be that of Councilman Kriss Worthington, who has a long history of being the students' champion. In fact, Worthington has appointed more students to city commissions than any other council member in the city's history. Right now, Worthington's District Seven encompasses everything from the south entrance of campus down to the Oakland border, primarily between Fulton Street and College Avenue. But if it becomes the students' district, then Worthington will likely face a student challenger when he's up for reelection in 2014.

Students aren't going to develop a formal plan until summer break is over, but Freeman acknowledged that a student majority district would likely combine the student populations of District Seven and adjacent District Eight, held by Councilman Gordon Wozniak. "Most of this activity would be involved in Districts Seven and Eight because that's where most of the students are located," Freeman explained.

As it stands, District Eight is a hodgepodge of students, who make up almost 40 percent of the district's residents, and wealthy, moderate homeowners. The district includes the dorms, sororities and frat houses east of College Avenue, some of the co-ops north of campus, and a couple of the city's most affluent neighborhoods, Elmwood and Claremont. So the most feasible student plan would swap the students out of District Eight in exchange for the homeowners who currently reside south of Derby Street in Worthington's district. The end product would be one student-oriented district and one homeowners' district.

As usual, politics makes interesting bedfellows. This time around, Wozniak is taking up the student district cause even though he has garnered a reputation over the years for putting homeowners' needs first. In the first round of what could be a long, drawn-out fight, Wozniak placed a measure on the July 19 council agenda seeking to extend the deadline for submitting redistricting proposals from September 16 to November 1. He said that since school starts only three weeks before the deadline, students won't have enough time to develop a thoughtful proposal with campus-wide input and support. Under the charter, the city has until December 2013 to complete the redistricting process.

Wozniak's extension proposal also would give students a chance to submit a redistricting plan that doesn't run afoul of the city charter and could be in effect for the November 2012 elections. And though removing students from his district would likely help the moderate Wozniak politically, he denies trying to dump the students in order to maintain his seat. "I'm happy to keep the students," he said. "But it makes more sense to have homeowners congregated in one district and to have the students in another district. There isn't a lot of interaction between these communities."

Meanwhile, Worthington opposes Wozniak's proposal for an extension on redistricting plans. "There's no reason why we shouldn't redistrict now," Worthington said. "The students are going to have to amend the charter to get what they're asking for anyway." Worthington said he does not oppose a city charter amendment to create a student majority district.

Regardless, all of the politicking may become moot if students are unable to rally citywide support for a charter amendment. And considering the history of antagonism between Berkeley homeowners and Cal students, they're facing an uphill climb. "Berkeley has a history of town-and-gown division, so it could be a tough sell," said Jennifer Stoan, a political scientist at Arizona State University who grew up in Berkeley and received her doctorate from Cal.

SOME RESIDENTS ARE ALREADY RAISING QUESTIONS: DO STUDENTS EVEN REGISTER TO VOTE IN BERKELEY? CAN STUDENTS COMPLETE FOUR-YEAR TERMS? WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY'RE ACCEPTED INTO GRAD SCHOOL? HOW DO THEY JUGGLE THE RESPONSIBILITIES?

Some residents are already raising questions: Do students even register to vote in Berkeley? Can students complete four-year terms? What happens if they're accepted into grad school? How do they juggle the responsibilities of serving on the city council while attending one of the most competitive universities in the world?

Abbasi said Cal produces the most politically intelligent young people in the world — they're passionate, competent, and devoted to doing the right thing. A student councilmember would be completely capable of serving the city in the highest manner possible, he argued. The key to winning a referendum, he said, will be gaining support from a council majority while appealing to voters' sense of justice. "After talking to a lot of concerned individuals, I've found that when you appeal to their sense of justice, fairness, and morality, they do have a lot more willingness to understand our concerns," Abbasi said. ●

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Tune-Yards.com

tUnE-yArDs is Merrill Garbus, a New England-bred, Oakland-residing white woman whose music combines Afropop, spoken word, hip-hop, rock, reggae, doo-wop, and jazz; who employs instruments and samples including ukulele, horns, sirens, and pots and pans, in addition to her own powerful voice; and who sings about concepts as disparate as race and gender relations, sex, gentrification, and body image (all without ever seeming preachy, mind you). Basically, this woman's entire existence is a testament to the creative velocity of heterogeneity. Hell, she doesn't even use consistent capitalization. tUnE-yArDs' debut album, 2009's *BiRd-BrAiNs*, was a quiet critical hit, but April's *w h o k i l l* hit with the wallop of something much bigger, earning accolades from all across the critical spectrum. It's a mesmerizing jungle of influences and elements, deftly flitting between genres in a way that manages to feel completely organic — the kind of album you can listen to hundreds of times and still find something to be surprised by. It's easily the best local release of the year thus far.

BEST REMIXED ART GALLERY

57th Street Gallery

5791 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-654-8974, 57thStreetGallery.com

Much like a jazz freestyle or an abstract painting, 57th Street Gallery evolved fairly organically. A lifelong art collector and jazz lover, owner Floyd Pullom reportedly founded the space with few ambitions — mostly, in fact, it was just as a means of storing and sharing his massive collection of jazz-and-blues themed artwork. But now 57th Street Gallery is a gem of the local jazz scene, hosting jam sessions and performances several nights a week and attracting high-profile local musicians like Khalil Shaheed, Howard Wiley, and Calvin Keys for regular gigs. The art side of the business has expanded, too, with rotating and permanent pieces spread out over two rooms. Some take the music theme literally — a series of portraits illuminates jazz greats like Lena Horne and Louis Armstrong in arresting blues and purples — while others just seem to complement the vibe in a more subtle way. Altogether, it's a multidisciplinary exploration of the jazz experience, broadly defined — not to mention a fresh, inventive take on what it means to be an arts space.

BEST NEW TAKE ON A CLASSIC PLAY

Three Sisters at Berkeley Rep

BerkeleyRep.org

It happens all the time: An ambitious contemporary playwright tries to interpret a canonical text — and, almost invariably, ends up with nothing more than an incomprehensible exercise in writerly vanity. *Hamlet* in drag, Tennessee Williams as a musical set in a heroin den in 1980s Milwaukee, *Waiting for Godot* performed by trained monkeys speaking Dutch. Not so for Sarah Ruhl's brilliant adaptation of *Three Sisters* earlier this season at Berkeley Rep, which kept the Chekhov drama's plot completely intact while using minor language tweaks to make the characters seem more three-dimensional, more alive, more relatable to modern audiences — and all without hitting you over the head with a capital A adaptation. Combined with brilliant direction by Les Waters and historically accurate set dressing and costume design, the overall production was appropriately deferential without being flat, judiciously updated for modern audiences without being too self-consciously subversive. It was also perhaps the only time a dense Russian family drama has managed to earn genuine guffaws from an audience: a true feat of adaptation.

BEST REMIXED LITERARY EVENT

First Person Singular at Pegasus on Solano

1855 Solano Ave., Berkeley 510-525-6888
1stPersonSingular.com

The problem with literary events is that they're rarely, well, events. After all, it's hard to think of an activity any more inherently flat than sitting in a room and listening to some author on the umpteenth leg of his book tour read aloud. That's what veteran local bookseller Joe Christiano thought, too, and he decided to do something about it. Enter First Person Singular, a more-or-less-monthly literary event that uses staged readings, live music, and more to shake up the timeworn lit-event format — and change the definition of what's "literature" in the process. February's iteration featured Sixties girl group songs reinterpreted as cultural artifacts and performed in the style of a classical recital. The March event spotlighted four local professional actors performing monologues from all ten plays in August Wilson's *Century Cycle*. Other First Person Singular events have highlighted the letters of Flannery O'Connor, baseball stories, and Warren Zevon songs, "spoken, sung, and howled" — all to standing-room-only crowds, by the way. It's a literary event with the energy and immediacy of a stage play or a rock concert, created by and for people who refuse to believe that literature should ever be boring.

BEST DIVERSIFIED PROGRAMMING

Pandora

Pandora.com

At its inception, Pandora's music genome project was part art project, part science experiment, part educational tool, part entertainment, and partly a work of philanthropy. And for a long time, it was essentially a money-losing operation. (It apparently didn't start making a profit until 2009, roughly eight years after its genesis.) But founder Tim Westergren and staff kept soldiering on through the hard times, and more importantly, they kept innovating. Now, in addition to offering personalized radio stations for virtually every music artist under the sun, Pandora has also expanded into comedy. This new "genome" is structured the same way as its music counterpart, offering individualized artist stations in addition to genre playlists (in this case, "raw comedy," "working class," "icons," "golden oldies," et cetera, et cetera). Pandora is still working out the algorithmic glitches, but so far, the move has paid dividends.

BEST COMEDY SHOW REMIX

Comedy Brains at The Marsh Berkeley

2120 Allston Way, Berkeley 510-704-8291
TheMarsh.org

All of a sudden, the East Bay is awash in comedy. We've got it at bars, at coffeehouses, at stage theaters, in BART stations; pretty soon your local funeral parlor will install a faux brick wall and start hosting open mic nights. We are positively up to our eyeballs in yuk-yuks — and it's both despite and because of that oversaturation that Comedy Brains stands out. The brainchild of local funny lady Marga Gomez, the weekly showcase aims to subvert the standard comedy show template by favoring acts that are a little more storytelling-oriented, a little more personal, a little more highbrow than your typical comedy show (not for nothing does the event have the word "brains" in the title). The setup keeps the basic comedy show format intact — three sets by three comics, sometimes centered around a theme ("smart smut," "clean and sober comedy"), sometimes not. But at Comedy Brains, you're unlikely to find the standard rat-a-tat setup-joke-punch line rhythm or any of the shopworn motifs that tend to dominate mainstream comedy shows — hell, there's not even a brick wall. Instead, you'll get asides, anecdotes, and personal stories, told with all the honesty of a close friend but all the observational wit of a trained comic. The Saturday night series is currently on hiatus, but keep an eye out come autumn.

BEST DJ

DJ Rahiem Jihad

House music is back. Or maybe it was back a few years ago, with the growing popularity of such events as The People Party and, more recently, a second Friday event called Evolve. Launched by East Coast native Soul Lazanni, it also features popular San Francisco DJ David Harness and Oakland favorite Raheem Jihad, a nine-year vet with wax slinging strongly ingrained in his family pedigree. (Jihad's father, also a DJ, lent Jihad his first pair of vintage turntables.) Many of Jihad's mixes are available as podcasts, and what's striking about them isn't just the strong addictive grooves but the omnivorousness of genre. Yes, Jihad favors a strong, propulsive house beat. But he also likes worldish Afro-Caribbean production, soulful hooks, and singable melody lines. When he's not holding court at Evolve, Jihad graces many house and electronic events throughout the Bay Area. His online presence is surprisingly unassuming, but his importance is undeniable.

BEST QUEER PARTY FOR STRAIGHTS

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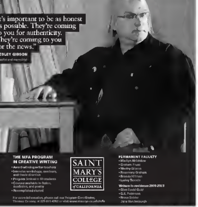
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MOST UNLIKELY PLACE TO SEE ART ON THE WALLS
The Uptown

about male "hags." The joke is that sure, it's socially acceptable for a hetero woman to hang with a gaggle of gay men but you'd never expect to see a straight man trailing a group of lesbians. Mostly true. Except at the (relatively) new twice-monthly dance party Ships in the Night. Though it's billed as a "radical queer" event, Ships appeals to a wide variety of people — including, yes, straight men. The recent Pride edition featured guest DJ J Boogie, rappers Anna the Dreamer and Raw G, Fiona Simone, and Purple Rhinestone Eagle. And that's not to mention the all-star lineup of DJs: Black Dirt, Maren Allette Andre, G Star Mario, Lady Ryan, Olga T and special guests. Clearly, there are enough of them to cover a wide swath of the pop music ecosystem. And that's not to mention that each Ships event benefits a different set of nonprofit organizations. Now that's radical.

BEST COMEDIAN WITH A MESSAGE

Janine Brito

JanineBrito.tumblr.com

Quick! Catch this rising star before she's whisked off to the Big Apple. Or so we think. After all, her last several sets included bits about cross-country moving. Janine Brito is relatively new on the scene, but she's gained a lot of mileage since opening for W. Kamau Bell's "Blacktastic Black History Month Black-tacular Black" last year. Now she cites Bell as a mentor, and he in turn calls her "Oakland's next W. Kamau Bell," which is actually a pretty high compliment. The two perform alongside Hari Kondabolu and Nato Green in the political comedy tour Laughter Against the Machine, one of the few roving stand-up shows that tackles colonialism, racial hegemony, filmmaker Tyler Perry, and other thorny subject matter. Much of Brito's material has to do with being

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EAST BAY EXPRESS

Best band with cross-pollinated roots: The Memorials. Chris Duffey

an out lesbian — which, of course, adds to her appeal in the East Bay — but she's also known for a very funny haiku about white people.

BEST BAND WITH CROSS-POLLINATED ROOTS

The Memorials

TheMemorialsMusic.com

Composed of three Berklee School of Music alumni — two of whom also attended Berkeley High — this power rock trio has real musicianship to ground it. Drummer Thomas Pridgen toured with The Mars Volta and various other pop acts, although he's also schooled in jazz and R&B. That means he can shift from a polyrhythm to a solid backbeat, exhibiting control as well as creativity. Singer Viveca Hawkins, who started out in gospel choirs and later sang backup with the Key Choice Ensemble, has the vocal range to accommodate just about any style. She can yowl like a rock star or belt out a hard, churchy wail that hovers uneasily over Nick Brewer's guitar parts. The trio format seems to suit this group best — the members are hard-core pleasure-seekers and weed enthusiasts for whom "looseness" seems essential. That said, they also perform with a full band, featuring Uriah Duffy on bass and Maya Kronfeld or Michael Aaberg on keys. Check out The Memorials' live show if you get a chance — it's electrifying.

BEST VARIETY AT A JAZZ CLUB

Yoshi's

510 Embarcadero West, Oakland, 510-238-9200, Yoshis.com

Yoshi's relatively recent decision to widen its musical offerings stirred a lot of debate in the Bay Area jazz scene, which is known for its purist tendencies. Perhaps the impetus was financial, but nonetheless, we're rather impressed with the results. Just glance at the Oakland club's July calendar and you'll see George Clinton's Parliament/Funkadelic nestled alongside the Escovedo Family, Average White Band, eighty-year-old jazz guitarist Kenny Burrell, and soul singer Bettye LaVette. Some of the more adventurous bookings of 2011 have also included Cindy Blackman's tribute to fusion drummer Tony Williams, which featured Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid and a guest performance by Blackman's husband, Carlos Santana. They played fusion in its original, hard jazz form — not the watered-down Eighties version that's become associated with the genre. You'd be hard pressed to find artists of that caliber at any other Bay Area venue.

BEST SWAG ORIGINATOR

Lil B

BasedWorld.com

It remains a point of contention whether Berkeley rapper Lil B was — or is — the godfather of the Swag movement. At any rate, he's one of its main proponents. Known for his stream-of-consciousness raps and delirious stage performances, Lil B generated a whole cult of fandom based on his "cooking" dance

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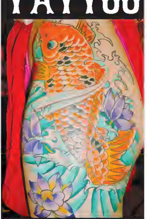

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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST ANNUAL EVENT

Burning Man
Because it gets thousands of annoying hippies out of the Bay Area ... yippie. — *Oaklandish*

Cal Performances' Fall Free for All
A full day of high-quality free performances in classical, jazz and world music and dance on the campus of UC Berkeley and, it's FREE. — *ceenpeepee*

Eat Real Festival
One of my favorite days of the year. You get to run around like a small child, sampling everything, testing the limits of your stomach. And nothing was bad. I still drool thinking about a Cuban sandwich and burger I tried here. — *east bay barbs*

How Berkeley Can You Be?
Bring it back! How many more Wavy Gravy years do we have left? Let's not squander them. — *Janelle Biery*

Passover
Even though Elijah never comes, it still rocks!!! — *publictransmute*

BEST ARTIST

Ben Crowden
His amazing kinetic sculptures add unnecessary gears to everyday life. Now that's what I call art. — *justsaitr*

Delaine Hackney
Best mosaic artist ever — *Ruthie*

Mellow Garden Artglow
Her work is the shit. — *dougaphunk*

BEST ART MURMUR OFFSHOOT

Free Cookies
Fellow hangs out on a blow up couch and gives out cookies. SOOOO good! — *ScreennameRhyme*

Oakland Art Ride
Good for you, RPS Collective, you're keeping it real. — *heyheyhey*

BEST BAND

The Bell Brothers
Great country rock band ... a lost craft in these parts! — *lmnyk*

California Honeydrops
Rock my socks. And Lech is a hottie! Ow OW! — *suuuuuhname*

BEST CLUB

Bar Three Fifty-Five
Hidden and hip gem with decor to make everyone look beautiful. Best bartenders: good looking and friendly and knowledgeable. Memorable cocktails. — *ofold*

(an extravagant ballet for the upper body only), his overexposed Twitter account, and his prodigious use of the term "swag." To top it all off, Lil B raised more than a few eyebrows with the marketing campaign for his next album. The title? *I'm Gay*. But like not in a gay way, said the avowedly heterosexual emcee. Whether or not Lil B has real staying power remains to be seen. He cut his teeth as a member of famed hyphy group The Pack, yet he hopes to supersede hyphy in his solo career. So far, fans have bought into it.

BEST LOCAL FILM EVENT

Temescal Street Cinema

Thursdays during the summer at 8 p.m., 49th St. and Telegraph Ave., Oakland, TemescalStreetCinema.com

Temescal Street Cinema is one of those wonderfully Oakland creations. Started in 2008, the event offers free weekly screenings during the summer by different Bay Area filmmakers on the side of a building at 49th Street and Telegraph Avenue. Founders Catarina Negrine and Suzanne L. Henreux brought the idea to the Temescal Business Improvement District, and have since shown a variety of films ranging from DIY documentaries to hamster road trips. This year's season, which ran from June 3 to July 14, featured films that explored topics including the poet Gary Snyder and a night of animated shorts. Plus there was free popcorn and opening performances by various Bay Area musicians. Oakland at its finest, indeed.

BEST BROADWAY STAR-TURNED FOLK DIVA

Crystal Monee Hall

CrystalMoneeHall.com

Okay, maybe the term "folk" is a slight exaggeration. But Crystal Monee Hall's 2010 debut album *River Train* had all the right signifiers: an acoustic guitar, several original love ballads, a bluesy cover of Pat Benatar's "Heartbreaker." Originally from Virginia, Hall honed her chops at Greensboro Baptist Church, then moved to New York and — through a fortuitous sequence of events — landed parts in several Broadway musicals, including *Rent*. Since moving to the Bay Area she's devoted those supple contralto vocals to her own material and to the Jazz Mafia Symphony Orchestra. In the past year alone she performed at Stern Grove, Monterey Jazz Festival, and the Hollywood Bowl. Hall can certainly lift an entire fifty-piece ensemble, but we still recommend checking her out in a lounge format. This woman kills.

BEST PLACE TO SEE A SHOW, GET A BUZZ AND GET A TATTOO

Eli's Mile High Club

3629 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Oakland, 510-350-7818, ElisMileHigh.com

As a general rule, booze and tattoos aren't the worst combination. Alcohol thins the blood and tends to cloud judgment; one too

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Best artist, Monica Canilao.

Chris Duffey

many drinks and a crude sketch of Bart Simpson mooning a cop begins to seem like a reasonable thing to get inked on your forearm. But despite the potential regret that can result from a combination of intoxication and permanence, a tattoo shop-slash-bar just seems like a fitting fusion, with both venues appealing to similar crowds. Since Mile High Club launched The Club House Tattoo Shop on its second floor in April, it can now lay claim to being the only bar in the East Bay where you can eat French fries, drink sugary and delicious alcoholic concoctions like the Elderflower Cooler, check out a monthly rotation of art, see a raging punk or metal show, and then get a tattoo to commemorate the ridiculously fun time you had.

BEST ARTIST

Monica Canilao

MonicaCanilao.com

Oakland artist Monica Canilao creates the kind of distinctive art that is so enrapturing in its aesthetic that it kind of makes you wish the real world could look the way she must view it: a world where wispy-limbed women wear small swaying houses like turtle shells, geometric shapes oversee cityscapes, and every discarded scrap of fabric, wood, and paper is repurposed into some whimsical edifice. Canilao, who earned her BFA from California College of the Arts, churns out a fervent assortment of skillful drawings, paintings, collages, and installations that are inarguably East Bay influenced, in part because much of her work is composed of found materials that she carefully combs and culls from city streets. In recent years her talent has been widely recognized in glossy magazines and at faraway galleries — recently she's been in Michigan using discarded goods to transform a dilapidated Detroit house into a sort of walk-in wonderland — but the heart behind her art remains in Oakland.

BEST METAL BAND

Saviours

KillerSaviours.blogspot.com

It's tough to be a metal band in the Bay Area. The talent bar's so high, the fans so informed and discerning, you've got to be pretty amazing to get noticed. For years, Saviours were largely overshadowed by the success of their peers High on Fire, despite the fact that the Oakland band packed plenty of ass on its own. But after years of hard work, relentless touring, and some lineup changes, Saviours appear to finally be getting their proper due. Eschewing trends, the band's aesthetic harks back to the glory days of metal — the late Seventies and early Eighties — when the riffs were potent, the solos electrifying, the drums discernible, and the sound warm and analog. Of course, Saviours put their own spin on the past with a faster, rawer, beefier feel — most noticeable on their last album, 2009's *Accelerated Living*. The band is currently working on new material, and judging from a recent live show, it sounds like these East Bay boys are well on their way to establishing a standard of their own.

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BEST UNDER 21 HANGOUT

924 Gilman Street

924 Gilman St., Berkeley 510-525-9926, 924Gilman.org

For the music lover, there is nothing crappier than being under 21 years old. Most places hosting shows on the weekend serve beer or booze, consequentially locking out a whole demographic of kids. That's what makes places like 924 Gilman awesome. Sure, if you don't like loud raw music or don't like to breathe sweat and swirl around in the mosh pit cyclone that often accompanies shows, it may not be for you. But what the 25-year-old nonprofit offers to punk lovers and rockers coming to enjoy the show is three simple rules: no alcohol, no drugs, and no violence. Gilman has hosted some of the biggest and baddest artists in the punk scene over the years including Operation Ivy, Dropkick Murphys, and Bad Religion, and Gilman offers this safe space and onslaught of music to a generally neglected and hungry youth. Oh and for you over-21ers who want to enjoy a drink as well, just head over to the nearby Pyramid Brewery beforehand to quench your thirst.

BEST SPOKEN WORD OUTLET

Youth Speaks' Oakland Mic

Every second Friday, at Oakland Art Gallery 199 Kahn's Alley, Oakland, YouthSpeaks.org

Youth Speaks is a San Francisco-based organization that holds poetry slams and open mics for emerging under-21 poets in various venues around the Bay Area, including a popular Oakland Mic held on the second Friday of every month at the Oakland Art Gallery. With Bay Area poets ranging from the just beginning to the incredibly talented, Youth Speaks attracts the most diverse mix of positive young people you'll find anywhere. And with even the worst poets applauded zealously and the best given the opportunity to showcase their work at Queerosity and Poetry National slams, these free events are a great place to take your first fledgling poet steps, or spit your seasoned sonnets to an appreciative audience.

BEST DJ/DRUM DUO

Skins & Needles

Here's a riddle: What do you get when you combine a Crown City Rockers drummer with an in-demand DJ/remixer? Skins & Needles, of course, a duo that gets the party started with live drums, breaks, scratching, and mixing. Drummer Max MacVeety honed his chops with hip-hop band Crown City Rockers for a decade; he's opened for artists like Mos Def, Black Eyed Peas, Kaleem Bluebalicious, and Spearhead to name a few. Partner in crime DJ Zeph got his start break-dancing in his hometown of Santa Cruz, and his résumé includes projects with HBO and MTV. The two get around. They've played everywhere from The Independent to the Shattuck Down Low, New Parish, Elbo Room, Boom Boom Room, and Coda. Skins & Needles aren't really a riddle — they're just two local boys mixing good old-fashioned booty-pumping jams. As MacVeety and Zeph say, "Man, woman, dog, child, alien — we have something for everyone."

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST EAST BAY SLANG WORD

Slap
To fail or wipe out. — *Illmartmar*

Magazine
Young people have been using this to describe women's parts. — *holidaygirl43*

Shmammered
The next step beyond hammered. — *Lauren Vonnegut*

BEST LOCAL AUTHOR

Mary Roach
Love her crazy footnotes! — *Kamal*

Michael Chabon
I've read everything he's written, I think. He's also a nice guy and easy on the eyes. — *jpeniell*

BEST LOCAL BOOK

The Practical Napper
Gotta love naps! — *Liz*

BEST LOCAL FILM

A-Team
Drugs and crime. In Alameda. Totally fiction. — *PSBA*

BEST MUSIC VENUE

924 Gilman
No question! Volunteer and collectively-run, not for profit, all ages, awesome (and) newly upgraded sound system, and $5-$6 not vegan! — *Russell Ell*

The Fox Theater
I used to think the Fillmore was the best but now you can't drag me to a show in SF on a weeknight. Long live the Fox, which gets me home by eleven on school night. — *Meline, Jennifer*

BEST POET

Clay Hirchenbauer
He's the only poet I know. — *Sharlotte*

BEST RADIO STATION

KALX
I have always loved KALX. We need to make sure our community radio stations don't get sold off (like what's currently happening to KUSF this year). KALX plays so many different genres of music and has really entertaining DJs with real live personalities! You never know what you will hear, but it will definitely be entertaining, and worth it! And talk about the best ticket giveaways! Holy cow! This station makes the Bay Area really special. — *The Work Italian*

BEST RAPPER

The Jacka
Super flows super hot. — *jmowen*

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Michael Francis conductor
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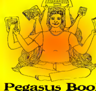

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Chris Duffey

BEST INDEPENDENT RECORD LABEL

Wide Hive Records

1164 Solano Ave., #416, Albany, 510-845-4675, WideHiveRecords.com

Gregory Howe knows that great things start in living rooms. After college, he moved to the Bay Area and started recording local artists in a studio out of his home. Twenty years later, his Wide Hive Records in Albany has its own fully equipped, deluxe space and has released more than thirty records featuring artists like Calvin Keys, Phil Ranelin, DJ Zeph, Azeem, and Harvey Mandel — blending jazz, funk, hip-hop, rock, and soul into complex and satisfying music. The label's latest offering is thirteen tracks from Larry Coryell, the "godfather of fusion" according to *Downbeat*, backed by the Wide Hive Players, Howe's in-house band. Some have called jazz-funk "jazz for the dance hall" — a lesser music form — but Howe's Wide Hive label proves them wrong. It doesn't matter if it's the dance hall or the living room, as long as the groove gets out.

BEST AFTER-HOURS SPOT

Birdland Jazzista Social Club

1733 Sacramento St., Berkeley, BirdlandJazz.org

Formerly known as the Birdland Jazz Club and Multi Culti Grill, this Friday night venture has become a veritable institution in Berkeley. At its genesis, the place served barbecue to the public and proprietor Michael Parayno allowed patrons to roast s'mores on the sidewalk. He ended those practices after a spate of permit battles with the City of Berkeley, but the venue itself is still going strong. Now open to members only (the definition of a "member" is fairly unrestrictive, apparently) the club is essentially a large weekly party held in Parayno's backyard and driveway. He books two sets of jazz and world music a night, featuring such crackerjack local artists as Alex Pinto, Jaz Sawyer, Josh Jones, Valerie Troutt, Crystal Monee Hall, Dayna Stephens, and Tito y Su Son de Cuba. Recently, Parayno expanded to include an earlier set on Saturday and an afternoon show on Sunday, with chicken and waffles included. But Friday nights are still his bread and butter. Few places in Berkeley keep the music bumping after 11 p.m. — the time of Birdland's second set. This one is a rare treat.

BEST MULTI-PLATFORM FESTIVAL

Eat Real

EatRealFest.com

There's a reason Eat Real managed to draw a staggering 70,000 people in its very first year. Street food is popular, as are festivals, so it's pretty much a given that a multi-day street food festival will be an instant success, especially around here. But there's more to it than that. In addition to the numerous taco trucks, cupcake carts, and food-and-beverage booths (all selling food for no more than $5), Eat Real also showcases numerous other aspects of the growing/preparing/eating process. Last year, that meant musical performances, butchering, canning, and preserving competitions; noodle-pulling, pizza-tossing, and kombucha-culturing demonstrations; film screenings; and a slate of local food writers reading stories on a variety of food related themes (sample topic: "things I've eaten off the street"). Coming once again to Jack London Square for its third iteration in September, it's a food festival that doesn't require you to be an obsessive foodie to appreciate — though we do suggest you come hungry.

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tuneless rendition of Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'," then, well, the world should be your oyster. Or at least the rarefied theater world. Such is the case for Ashkon Davaran, whose big claim to fame is a viral video to celebrate the Giants' 2010 World Series victory. (A spin-off of the 1981 pop song by Journey, it has garnered well over 2 million views thus far.) He went on to star in Shotgun Players' production of *Beardo*, a comic history of the Russian mystic Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin. It's hard to gauge whether his portrayal was entirely accurate — he played the 19th-century monk as a kind of rock god Lothario, who wreaked havoc on the palace of Emperor Nicholas II — but it was wildly entertaining. Clad in only his skivvies (or a sheath), he sassed the aristocracy, cavorted with some peasants, shagged the emperor's wife, cured their hemophiliac son, and performed several anthemic rock numbers. If the real Ashkon Davaran is anything like his god-like persona, he'll certainly go far.

BEST ACTIVIST ARTIST

Favianna Rodriguez

Favianna.com

At just 32, Favianna Rodriguez has a résumé that reads like it should belong to someone twice her age. Her work has been exhibited in museums all across the country, including, locally, the de Young and Oakland museums; she's founded and co-founded several organizations that work to combine art and activism, including the Taller Tupac Amaru printing studio and the EastSide Arts Alliance; and last year, she co-edited a book of political illustrations — all uncopyrighted and intended to be reproduced by anyone who wants them. This success isn't for nothing. The Oakland-born, Oakland-based printmaker is both a tireless activist and a brilliant artist, ever-cognizant of the power her work holds as an organizing tool and always striving to, as her official artist's statement says, "translate the messages of the frontlines into works of art that can be used to educate and mobilize." Artistically, her work is graphic, visceral, and unmistakably alive with arresting saturated colors and bold type. Intellectually, it covers a broad swath of social justice issues, including the Iraq War, corporate irresponsibility, and human rights. Ultimately, it's proof that political art can — and, indeed, should — still be pretty.

BEST MUSEUM REMIX

The Oakland Standard at the Oakland Museum of California

1000 Oak St., Oakland. 510-238-2200, MuseumCA.org/theoaklandstandard

The Oakland Museum of California's massive recent renovation signaled not just a cosmetic change, but an institutional one. Though the museum is still more than making good on its mission of showcasing California history, art, and science, in the last couple years it's made a point of doing so in a completely new way — a way that's dynamic, creative, and accessible; that's more experiential and less didactic; and that's entirely removed from the please-do-not-touch formality you'll find in many similar institutions. That meant reimagining the museum's physical space and recalibrating its notion of who and what California is, more concretely, it has resulted in undertakings like an ambitious, recently completed cataloging effort that gives laypeople digital access to some 27,500 objects, many of which aren't currently on view. But perhaps the best encapsulation of the museum's new ethos is The Oakland Standard, a series of contemporary art projects and events designed to engage museum-goers in unexpected ways. This summer, the Standard will be commissioning a collaborative short film that features professional actors recreating real-life stories from the museum; previous events have featured artists' talks and film screenings, in addition to communal meals, screen printing workshops, and Turf Feinz performances. Please do touch. ●

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— *sluze*

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— *Bbaro*

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Layover Comedy Night
There's no "best comedy show" but there's "best place to play board games"?!
— *Splegelmanis*

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Tourettes without Regrets
giggity — *EnigmaTKF*

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Lil' Hamlet's Monster Bash
— *PSBA*

BEST LOCAL COMEDIAN
Alicia Dattner
— *laughterlover*

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ASL INTERPRETER ON SITE FOR AUG. 14 SHOW
Aug. 25, Montclair Ball Field, Montclair, 7:00 PM
Sept. 10, Community Park, Davis, 7:00 PM
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Goods & Services

Best [illegible] to geek and joke: The Escapist Comic Bookstore.

Chris Duffey

BEST MEET-UP FOR [illegible] AND GEEKS

The Escapist Comic Bookstore

3090 Claremont Ave., Berkeley, 510-65COMIC, EscapistComics.com

Yes, it's a bookstore. But did you know that The Escapist also hosts comedy nights? Real talk! It's perhaps the only open mic in the Bay Area where there's a 30 percent chance that every bit will lead off with a Dungeons and Dragons joke. (Lydia Popovich tried one in May, and the audience actually got it.) And aside from that, it's got a magnificent legacy as the establishment that rose from the ashes of Comic Relief. Jack Reins, the proprietor of an adjacent sci-fi bookstore called Dark Carnival, purchased most of Comic Relief's stock earlier this year and hired several people who worked there. He unveiled The Escapist in March, much to the delight of every geek in Berkeley — including Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Chabon, who cracked a figurative bottle of champagne over the bookstore's figurative bow.

BEST OCCASIONAL SPLURGE

Pop-Up General Store

Grace Street Catering, 4620 Martin Luther King Jr Way, Oakland, PopUpGeneralStore.com

Underground food markets in the Bay Area skew flea market homey or rave-party funky, but not this one. Chez Panisse alums Chris Lee and Samin Nosrat organized the first Pop-Up General Store last year after the closure of Eccolo — the Berkeley restaurant where they cooked — left them pondering their next moves. Lee and Nosrat rallied their chef and food-artisan friends to sell restaurant-grade goodies at an occasional market in the historic North Oakland streetcar terminal that serves as Grace Street Catering's kitchen and client tasting facility. The schedule is irregular (follow on Twitter @popupgeneral, especially since it's a good idea to pre-order treats you know you want), and prices aren't cheap, but neither is the quality of the food. Favorites include heat-at-home potato-fennel gratin from Marc Jo Thorsen and Curt Clingman of shuttered Oakland restaurant Jojo. French pastries from Brian Wood of Starter Bakery, and seasonal jams from Blue Chair Fruit's Rachel Saunders. You can easily drop $80 and not even half fill your shopping tote, but look at it this way: You'll have a couple months to save up for the next one.

BEST BREAKFAST PASTRY

Kouign Amann at Starter Bakery

Available at various locations

We're not sure if *kouign amann* has become an insider's obsession because the name is impossible to pronounce without coaching (it's pronounced *kwee-yawn a-mahn*), impossible to make without holding a degree in advanced pastry, or because it's all but impossible to find. The traditional French morning sweet from Brittany is essentially a puff pastry cake made with the kind of salted butter the region is famous for, dusted with sugar that turns to a light sticky caramel as it bakes. The result is chewy, salty, sweet, and luscious. Emeryville wholesale patisserie Starter Bakery makes a fine version thanks to co-owner Brian Wood's years of training at the San Francisco Baking Institute, where he was an instructor specializing in flaky yeast doughs. Until the day Starter opens its own retail bakery, you can score Wood's *kouign* at Piccino's morning cafe, at Modern Coffee in downtown Oakland, Peaberry's Coffee and Tea in Rockridge Market Hall, or from the Starter stall at the Sunday Temescal or Wednesday Albany farmers' markets. And remember: If your pronunciation lesson fails you, you can always just point and hold up fingers to indicate how many *kouign* you want.

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BEST [illegible] TASTE OF MEXICO

Tejuino at Nieves Cinco de Mayo

3340 E. 12th St., Oakland, 510-533-6296

Before Coke, Squirt and Jarritos became ubiquitous, Mexico's thirsty could cool themselves with a variety of regional rustic drinks. In the state of Jalisco, that included the lightly fermented beverage called *tejuino*. Fruitvale artisan ice cream maker Luis Abundis still makes it the way his uncle taught him long ago at the family sweets shop in a little pueblo near Guadalajara. Abundis takes corn masa — the kind used for tortillas — thins it with water and adds pulverized *piloncillo*, the molasses-y raw sugar that comes in cones. The mixture's left out at room temperature for a day or more to ferment slightly. Then to order, Abundis ladles some of the pale, milky coffee-colored mixture over ice, squeezes in a bit of lime juice, and voila: *tejuino*, a tangy refreshing cooler with the prickle and slightly earthy funk of fermentation. Unlike Coca-Cola, *tejuino* is variable depending on how long the masa mix has been fermenting. We've had Abundis's *tejuino* when it's been almost as mild as *horchata* and as strong as an opened can of peach nectar left too long in the fridge, a variability that only adds to the drink's charm.

BEST FARMERS MARKET

Urban Village Temescal Farmers' Market

DMV Parking Lot, 5300 Claremont Ave., Oakland, Sundays year round, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Berkeley's trio of weekly markets skew locavore crunchy, the Friday Old Oakland market has Asian produce from Central Valley farmers, and the Saturday Grand Lake-Oakland market feels, well, grand. But the East Bay market that hews closest to our ideal of human-scale, neighborhood amenity sets up every Sunday in the DMV parking lot where Temescal and Lower Rockridge meet, turning an asphalt desert otherwise abandoned on Sundays into a genuine commons. The Temescal farmers market offers the right mix of produce, splurgy artisan foods, crafts carts and Blue Bottle drip. Market loyalists include latte-clutching Rockridge parents pushing fancy strollers, shawled ladies stopping by after Ethiopian Orthodox church services, tattooed Temescal lads, off-duty chefs like Daniel Patterson, and local tastemakers that include *San Francisco* magazine food editor Ian Newberry. Instead of being narrowly focused on impeccable produce or an hammering home some diktat about backyard composting, the Temescal market manages to serve as the essential center in the weekly life of an urban region.

BEST BACKYARD BERRIES

Raspberries from Avonovo Farms

On the sidewalk in front of 417 Avon St., Oakland, Sundays in season

Sundays in spring and again in fall, ninetysomething-year-old Jimmy Pedersen sets up a card table in front of his house in Lower Rockridge, takes on *The New York Times* crossword puzzle and — to supplement his social security check — sells $3 baskets of raspberries he picks in his backyard. A retired building contractor, Pedersen started with four bushes just a few years ago; last year he harvested approximately two hundred pounds of berries from the patch he calls Avonovo Farms, sold mostly to shoppers headed to the

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST AESTHETICIAN

Nancy Rhune

All natural all the time and before it was in vogue. — *jdl520*

BEST ART SUPPLIES

East Bay Depot for Creative Reuse

I am a teacher and I would die without this store. — *anne1423*

BEST BAKERY

Arizmendi

The only scones I'll eat. — *Malina, Jennifer*

Mmm ...cooperative bread — *Gallic_Way*

Bibiana's

I've seen stuff walk from the farmers' market across the street with bags of veggies for quiche, etc. Best scones, croissants... everything is so good! — *bbaron1978*

Brown Sugar Kitchen

They have in-house, from scratch baked goods EVERY DAY! Don't be so quick to walk past their display...it's no joke! — *Fourtis*

Cupkates

Follow that truck! — *LoukeFlorland*

Hopkins Street Bakery

The staff is always friendly and helpful, even when I stand in their small shop for five minutes ogling pastries and trying to decide! Their breakfast buns are to die for! Put one in the toaster oven and you're in heaven. Bonus: Show up five minutes before closing time and you can pick up their day-olds at buy one/get one free before they're really a day old! — *makena_katuba*

La Farine

Taste of European heaven. — *Rubble*

Masse's

By far the best croissants in Northern California. — *Bill Burnell*

Neldam's

My family has been going to Neldam's for four generations. It's the best bakery I've ever eaten from! — *Terri*

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Readers Poll Winners

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Joy Nicola at Ambiance Waxing and Facials

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Blick

BEST BAKERY
Arizmendi

BEST BIKE SHOP
Missing Link Bicycle Cooperative

BEST BOOKSTORE
Pegasus Books

BEST BREWERY
Pyramid Brewery

BEST CAMERA STORE
Looking Glass Photo

BEST CANNABIS DISPENSARY
Harborside Health Center

BEST CAR REPAIR
People's Precision

BEST CHEESES
The Cheeseboard Collective

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BEST WOMEN'S CLOTHING
Sway

Temescal farmers market (he also sells to Yasai Produce Market on College Avenue and to Celeste Cooper of Butterfat Bakery, who incorporates them into pastries for Remedy Coffee). Since they don't travel farther than a few blocks, Pedersen's pesticide-free fruit can be picked meltingly ripe after the raspberries' characteristically musky sweetness has developed. Pedersen's no ordinary urban-ag hobbyist — he's buddies with local farming legend Al Courchesne of Frog Hollow Farm in Brentwood, who's dropped in a few times to offer advice and pruning tips.

BEST CSA BOX

Phat Beets Produce's Beet Box

www.PhatBeetsProduce.org

There was a time where if you wanted fresh fruits and vegetables, you visited the local grocer or went straight to the source. But in the modern-day East Bay, it's never so simple. We're blessed with an abundance of options: grocery stores of every ilk, farmers' markets on every corner, fruit stands on the side of the road. Or, if you want the food to come to you, CSA — or community-supported agriculture — boxes are offered by a variety of farms and other outfits. The Beet Box, sold by North Oakland food justice organization Phat Beets, may be the best of the bunch. Weekly deliveries feature an abundance of widely varied, exceedingly fresh produce from a handful of organic and pesticide-free independent micro-farmers in Monterey and Fresno counties. Prices are kept lower than the competition through the use of neighborhood drop spots, so with Phat Beets you'll do good, eat well, and save money in the process.

BEST USE FOR RECYCLED VEGETABLES

City of Berkeley Free Compost Monthly Giveaway

The last Saturday of each month, February through October. EcologyCenter.org

Starting at 8:45 a.m. on the last Saturday of each month at the Berkeley Marina, Berkeley's Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department offers free compost to Berkeley residents. This dark, rich compost is a vitamin-charged, super-soil generated entirely from the green waste and food scraps collected from the city's residents. Well processed compost reeks only of sumptuous gardening possibilities and will provide a great base for your tomatoes should they ever grow after this year's record gray, damp East Bay winter and spring. Get there early because the landscapers are legion. Bring your ID, shovel, and mode of transport. Worms are optional.

BEST FUSION BREAD

Olive Bread at Phoenix Pastificio

1260 Addison St., Suite 109, Berkeley, 510-883-0783, PhoenixPasta.com

With its flour-dusted, thick, dark crust, springy interior, and generous serving of plump kalamata olives, Phoenix Pastificio's olive bread is one of the best combinations of flavors the East Bay has ever given rise to. This delectable loaf is available at the Phoenix Pastificio shop tucked into Strawberry Creek Park, or at its stall at the Berkeley (Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday), Oakland Grand Lake, Montclair, and Temescal farmers' markets, as well as at various shops throughout the East Bay. The olive bread can be eaten with butter or soup, or used to make garlic bread or crispy toast, but once you get a whiff of the warm bread's aroma, it won't make it home to execute those grand plans. And, best of all, the owner is willing to trade Meyer lemons — an ingredient for its also excellent lemon pastas — for a loaf.

COOLEST CHEESE SHOP

Sacred Wheel Cheese and Specialty Market

4935 Shattuck Ave., Oakland, 510-653-1363, SacredWheelCheeseShop.com

It's very easy to love cheese — with all its variations in flavor and texture and its magical ability to melt and spread. But it's especially easy to love when you're eating it in the cozy confines of the Sacred Wheel Cheese and Specialty Market, where, upon entering the establishment, your eyes and hands are drawn like magnets to the ever-present platters of tasty samples, colorful shelves lined with fancy oils and pastas, and a wide variety of cheeses. More than just some go-to spot when you need some chèvre or other impressive food item for your friend's dinner party, Sacred Wheel serves homemade soups (the winner: FBR tomato), an ever-changing variety of grilled cheese sandwiches, and sells delightful baked goods made by Semita Dulce bakery — like warm empanadas served with pepper and cilantro salsas, whoopee pies, and other neat treats for dessert. Yum.

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Feel Good Bakery

1650 Park St., Alameda, 510-864-2733, FeelGoodBakery.com

A good chocolate croissant — *pain au chocolat* to the Francophile — is one of life's great luxuries. Connoisseurs care about both the croissant (which shouldn't just be limp, vaguely butter-flavored bread) and the chocolate filling (which should be dispersed somewhat evenly and not just one big hard hunk). Alameda's Feel Good Bakery is the only place we know of in the East Bay that does a stellar job on both components. The croissant has a shatteringly crisp and flaky outer shell and a nice chewy interior; the chocolate inside is just right — slightly softened and exceedingly rich. If you're very lucky, your pain au chocolat will still be a little bit warm. And if you're very careful, maybe the flaky shards won't fly all over the place (though we'll admit we're in the habit of picking those oh-so-buttery bits off our shirts and eating them anyway).

BEST SOUNDTRACK AT A SEX SHOP

Feelmore510

1703 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-619-0199, Feelmore510.com

Chinese blossom wallpaper, spiritual grade books, vintage adult magazines, imaginative workshops (bike safety for sex workers, anyone?!), feminist porn, and "luxury items" aren't the only perks at Feelmore510, a new sex-positive retail outlet in downtown Oakland. One of the best reasons to visit is — well, the background music. Seriously. Nothing quite enhances an "adult" shopping experience like wall-to-wall jazz, the preferred genre of Feelmore510 owner Nenna Joiner. She also plays hip-hop, samba, reggae, and R&B, much of it spliced together by DJ Malcu Green, who hosts the Revolutions Radio podcast. Joiner puts so much care into the music selection at her store, she treats it as a separate art project. She'll even post the mixes on Feelmore510's Facebook page — if only to whet our appetite for an adult shopping experience.

BEST BREWERY

Triple Rock Brewing

1920 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-843-2739, TripleRock.com

There are beer drinkers, and then there are beer connoisseurs. To the connoisseur, a beer isn't just a frothy delicious liquid that intoxicates; it's art — a medium where gravity, color, bitterness, alcohol content, malts, and a plethora of other ingredients meld into a unique flavor with a distinct effect. Microbreweries are becoming increasingly popular with their unique take on the many different templates for ale: Indian Pale Ale, Stout, Porters, Wheat, and Pale Ales to name a few. But the greatest asset that comes with a micro-brewery is the ability to be adventurous while mastering the fundamentals. Enter Triple Rock Brewery. The Berkeley-based brew house offers an array of exceptionally crafted ales of particular deliciousness are

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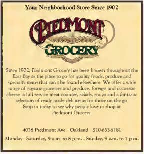
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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST BIKE SHOP

Bike Man Dan
Heart of gold! Repairs bicycles on a sliding scale so no one should ever go without having their transportation or fun! Now that is thoughtful!! — m

Bespoke Bicycle
A non-snobby bike shop! Who would have thought?! — *Collin_Wag*

BEST BOOK STORE

Cody's
Yeah, I know it's gone. — *berkeleyname*

Moe's Bookstore
In biz since 1959!! Take that Amazon.com! — *Tara Watson*

Walden Pond
Support local — or even chain bookstores — they're going extinct! — *Liz McFarland*

BEST BREWERY

Ale Industries
Orange Kush! Uncle Jesse! Rye'd Piper! Blast — *barrtone*

BEST CANNABIS DISPENSARY

40 Acres
They have the best medible: MAGIC BARS! — *Black Indian*

Purple Heart
Best prices, great products, cutest employees. — *applebeadsdane*

BEST CAR REPAIR

Greenworks
Honest, competent, reasonably-priced work, with an eco/green twist. What more could a Bay Area auto repair shop offer? — *Mimi S.*

XYZ Motor
Dude is easy on the eyes AND the pocketbook. — *ovt*

its dark ales — the Black Rock Porter and Stonehenge Stout — each meaty thick in gravity and smoking in taste. But it's the seasonal brews that really give the place its creative brand, like the White Chocolate Milk Stout from this past winter, which had the appearance and gravity of a paler ale, yet the marked sweetness of hot cocoa.

BEST SMALL BREWERY

Ale Industries

875 Detroit Ave., Unit E, Concord, 925-470-5280, AleIndustries.com

In case you missed it, beer is back. Not that it ever went anywhere, but microbrews and artisan beers are on people's tongues in more ways than one these days, which may have something to do with our corresponding love affair with local and sustainable food. Whatever the reason, the East Bay is experiencing a minor renaissance among independent and small-batch brewers. The dark horse is Concord's Ale Industries, not least because it's a bit off the beaten path. Of course, that hasn't stopped the small brewers from landing its innovative beers in bars and stores from Santa Clara to Sacramento, with a nexus in Berkeley and Oakland. Morgan Cox opened the brewery in early 2009 and currently produces three styles year round: Orange Kush, a refreshing wheat beer brewed with chamomile, orange peels, and coriander; Uncle Jesse's, a pale ale; and Rye'd Piper, a hoppy red rye. They're all delicious. And Cox isn't just a top brewer: he's also a good guy, having recently helped the brand new Oakland Brewing Company get its start.

BEST VINTAGE CLOTHING

Pretty Penny

5488 College Ave., Oakland, 510-594-0219, PrettyPennyClothing.com

Sometimes vintage shops are overwhelming; even the savviest shopper can be daunted by racks and racks of polyester. But at the clean and well-kept Pretty Penny, there's variety without making a vintage vixen's eyes glaze over. While the Rockridge boutique may cater to the hip California College of the Arts crowd, anyone can find a frock (or two) to twirl around in. Stocked with everything from eyelet sweaters to leather loafers, miniskirts, and sunglasses, the store can add wonderfully quirky pieces to any wardrobe — male or female. And for those who prefer to shop at two in the morning in their pajamas, Pretty Penny also sells its goods on Etsy.com.

BEST USED CLOTHING

Crossroads Trading Co.

2338 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-843-7600; 5901 College Ave., Oakland, 510-420-1952, CrossroadsTrading.com

Anyone who has sold clothing at one of Crossroads Trading Co.'s stores knows one thing: Those buyers are picky. But when they select your unworn Free People cardigan out of a giant black plastic garbage bag and attach a security tag with a satisfactory click, you know you've got hip taste. Thanks to its highly selective process, the chain store offers brands ranging from Anthropologie to Levi's to Anna Sui, with plenty of American Apparel hoodies tucked into the mix. And while Crossroads employees may be picky, they sure do pack this emporium of apparel full; a patient shopper can easily spend hours browsing through the dozens of racks for the perfect pullover or purse. The overload of options can make any downtrodden student or young professional look seemingly put together, and the price tags won't keep you up at night.

BEST PLACE TO BUY GIFTS OF JEWELRY
(FOR YOURSELF)

Philippa Roberts

4176 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-655-0656, PhilippaRoberts.net

There's no better spot in the East Bay for a woman in need of a bit of spoiling to douse

Best hybrid bike shop: Richmond Spokes

Chris Duffey

herself than the retail sanctuary that is Philippa Roberts. Whether you're celebrating your birthday or marking another significant event ("I gave myself a jewelry budget equal to the cost of filing for my divorce," a shopper gleefully informed the sales clerk during a recent visit), this jewelry and charming-gifty-things boutique was made for those times when you crave something unique, something to love, something that speaks to you. (And, face it — sometimes you simply can't depend on someone else to give it to you.) The store, where prices mostly fall in the $40-$250 range — is named after the jewelry designer, who proffers a vast selection of her own simple and lovely silver, gold, and semi-precious gemstone pieces. (Roberts' studio is at the back of the shop, and it's there that she and her team craft designs for more than two hundred specialty stores around the country, including the San Francisco MOMA and the Museum of Art and Design in New York City.) The shop also features a wide range of other jewelry designers, many of them local, and after a languid hour mulling over your options, it's impossible not to walk away satisfied — if just a tad bit broke. But don't you deserve it?

BEST FIXIE BIKE SHOP FOR NON-FIXIES

Manifesto Bicycles

421 40th St., Oakland, 510-595-1155, WeAreManifesto.com

Manifesto Bicycles is not the East Bay's best fixie shop because it sells the hippest bikes or constructs the most creative conversions or attracts the coolest kids as customers. No, it's the best fixie shop because its employees will replace the shifting chain ring on your beat-up 1970 Schwinn Cruiser, because they'll install a new derailleur and brakes on your (gasp!) ten-speed road bike, and because they'll do it (most of the time, at least) with a smile and for a surprisingly good price. One thing the bike community would do without is snobbery, and while Manifesto's small storefront is surely spic-and-span — and the shiny new minimalist bikes hanging from its walls sufficiently glamorous to suggest a price bracket perhaps out of reach — the shop is certainly not reserved for any rarefied audience. Pedalers of all persuasions can find a home in this unique fixie-fixated shop.

BEST HYBRID BIKE SHOP

Richmond Spokes

401 1st St., Suite 215, Richmond, 510-845-2243, RichmondSpokes.org

Most bike shops do just two things: sales and service. That's fine, but it's not how Richmond Spokes rolls. Instead, the Richmond nonprofit serves what you might call a higher calling: social justice, youth training, and entrepreneurship. Its activities as a full-service bike shop are filtered through that perspective: Youth participants not only work directly with customers (under the guidance of adult staff) but are encouraged and empowered to design, plan, market, and execute their own ideas. The organization also advocates for and educates around sustainability, community greening, and self-sufficiency; hosts group rides; and provides valet bike parking at public events throughout the East Bay. Even other bike co-ops may find themselves inspired by Richmond Spokes' broad vision. Is there anything a bicycle can't do?

BEST CAR REPAIR

Purrfect Auto Service

1809 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-527-4500, PurrfectAuto.com

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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST CHEESES

Berkeley Bowl West

Talk to the younger fellow who works at the cheese counter. He always has a recommendation and is available to help if you want a larger chunk cut down into a smaller. Very enthusiastic about exploring different cheeses and knowledgeable. Excellent choice for connoisseurs or newbies, and that's a broad spectrum to cover — *grrrr*

Cheeseboard

Need I say more? — *makers_kandie*

BEST CHILDREN'S STORE

Mr Mopp's

Hurray for the new owners! — *Tom Walton*

BEST COMIC BOOK STORE

Comic Relief

RIP — *Marniotir*

BEST CRAFT SUPPLY STORE

CW on 51st and Broadway

For when you want to start a new knitting project at 11 p.m. — *Malone, Jennifer*

BEST EYEGLASS SHOP

Eye Care on Lakeshore

Linda Moonsamy keeps you lookin' smart and sexy — *LittleFarland*

BEST FARMERS' MARKET

Berkeley Tuesday

On Derby between Milvia and MLK. Because the sun just seems to shine brighter there. — *Russell EB*

Lakeshore

Do you really have to ask — *ylbs30*

North Oakland Farmers' Market

The one without the Blue Bottle coffee line thirty people deep. The OTHER North Oakland Farmers Market. — *eot*

Old Oakland

It's a seething urban mass of humanity and farmers. — *rickleaf*

of repairs — can be an exercise in fear and self loathing. In such cases, efficiency and overall automotive know how aren't the only important things to consider when shopping around for the right mechanic. There's something to be said, too, for not being made to feel like an idiot if you can't tell your carburetor from your exhaust pipe — and even more for not getting taken advantage of. The guys at the Berkeley branch of Purrfect Auto Service know their stuff and their rates are more than reasonable. But the bottom line: These are honest people. They've been known to spend multiple sessions investigating some nagging problems with the old jalopy only to figure out, and recommend, a simple $10 fix you can do yourself. That kind of integrity? Priceless.

BEST PLACE TO BOOK ON THE CHEAP

White Elephant Sale

333 Lancaster St., Oakland, 510-536-6800, WhiteElephantSale.org

Sure it's only a once-a-year event, but Bay Area bibliophiles anticipate this annual March fund raiser for the Oakland Museum of California with glee. And why not? There's literally an entire factory full of glorious junk to peruse, but if you aren't a thrift store enthusiast, feel free to skip the bric-a-brac and the vintage-ish clothing and the piles upon piles of jewelry. The book section is where it's at. On the last day of the sale, customers get to cram a large paper grocery bag full of books for only $5 — stocking up on a whole year's supply of leisure reading in one fell swoop. Offerings run the gamut from old cookbooks and romance novels to comic books and back issues of *The Believer*, but the selection of literary fiction — whether obscure or Oprah-certified (and often in near-mint condition) — is always particularly impressive.

BEST PLACE TO FEED YOUR MUSE

The Writing Salon

Strawberry Creek Design Center, 2121 Bonar St., Studio D, Berkeley, 415-609-2468, WritingSalons.com

Whether you're an aspiring novelist who needs the structure of fixed deadlines or just a dabbler looking to broaden your creative horizons, The Writing Salon has something for you. Conceived by founder Jane Underwood as a creative writing school for adults, the Salon consists of two classrooms, one in San Francisco and the other in Berkeley, and offers a rotating slate of classes taught by local writers, everything from food writing to erotica to straight-up fiction. The classes are small and intimate (between six and thirteen students) and are serious without being intimidating. There's a nice mix, too, both in terms of age (with most students ranging from their twenties to their fifties, but you get the occasional retiree) and writing experience. And the Berkeley classroom, located at the Strawberry Creek Design Center, is set up like someone's living room, complete with comfy couches, hot tea, and — if your teacher is kind — plenty of tasty snacks.

BEST AFFORDABLE GUITAR LESSONS

Strike a Chord Guitar Program

7555 Skyline Blvd., Oakland, 510-834-1010, StrikeaChordGP.org

Why can't a ten-year-old learn to play Hendrix? Ah, but she can, with the expert help of the instructors at the Strike a Chord Guitar Program. The organization's army of guitar angels offers small classes in schools or at various private locations around the Bay Area. Your kid can't help but learn some cool riffs under the tutelage of Sun, who not only teaches guitar but is also a fusion belly dancer who loves to knit and bake peanut butter cookies, or Stas, who has

Best music instrument shop: The Starving Musician

Chris Duffey

toured with The Beach Boys and now jams with the African world band, Maluru, or Thomas, who was accepted to the Paris Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Music in London. Hour-long classes include eight to twelve kids and cost about $16 — and Strike a Chord will provide a guitar for your child to use both in class and at home, if need be. With public school arts enrichment budgets slashed beyond recognition, a class at Strike a Chord could be one of your best ways to fight back. It's what Jimi would do.

BEST MUSIC INSTRUMENT SHOP

The Starving Musician

2474 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-2648, StarvingMusician.com

People who work at instrument shops should be rewarded — period. Anyone who can endure hours upon hours of noodlers, bongo players, and others who insist on letting everyone hear how much they've been practicing "Stairway to Heaven" deserve medals of honor in our book. And the folks at The Starving Musician are no exception. The indie alternative to Guitar Center, Starving has a decent selection, friendly staff and fair prices. Plus, you can trade in your old gear for new (or used) stuff. Wanna trade in that distortion pedal for a delay one? Find a tom mount for your kit? The key to finding what you need is coming in frequently, as selection rotates often. But it's a less stressful experience than Craigslist, where you've got to be fast on the draw to get the good stuff. Plus, Starving's knowledgeable employees will help you navigate the selection without the attitude one might expect. Just spare them the jamming.

BEST CHARITY

Alameda County Community Food Bank

7900 Edgewater Dr., Oakland, 510-635-FOOD, ACCFB.org

There are few things more important than feeding people in need. Alameda County Community Food Bank has been feeding the East Bay since 1985 as the central hub of a distribution network that reaches 275 nonprofit Alameda County agencies. In 2010 ACCFB distributed 20 million pounds of food, more than 50 percent in fresh fruits and vegetables. The food bank still gathers donated and surplus foods for redistribution, but as the volume of its work has increased — it serves one in six Alameda County residents, of which nearly half are children and teenagers — it has leveraged its size and efficiency (only 4 percent total overhead) to turn each donated dollar into five dollars of distributed food. ACCFB accepts food donations from individuals, manufacturers, grocers, and growers through its red donation barrels in select East Bay locations, or at its Oakland headquarters. You can also donate money through its web site, or volunteer your time at the food bank itself, helping gather and distribute nutritious food to the hungry.

BEST SKIN DOCTOR

Dr. Cornelia Pessoa

Dermatology Associates of Berkeley, 2500 Milvia St., Berkeley, 510-486-1700, BerkeleyDerm.com

Your skin is right there for the world to see, so when things go wrong in that area, it's tempting to want to run and hide. Luckily East Bayers in need of skin soothing have access to a singularly terrific dermatologist in Dr. Cornelia Pessoa. A visit begins with pleasant and efficient staff who settle you in and keep everything running on schedule. From the moment Dr. Pessoa enters the exam room, you immediately sense that all will be well. She sits down and with no sense of hurry listens to everything you have to say, asks a few clarifying questions, examines the problem area, and together with you makes a plan for treatment. Dr. Pessoa offers services from the aesthetic (laser, chemical peels, Botox, etc.) to the treatment of serious medical and surgical problems of the skin. It would be impossible to overstate how clearly her empathy and compassion shine through with each visit — you'll leave feeling you've been heard and understood, and that it's all going to get better. A highly skilled and experienced clinician, esteemed by colleagues and loved by her patients, Dr. Pessoa is truly at the top of her class.

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST GAMES

Kickball

@ Mosswood park every Sunday — *RedRage*

BEST HARDWARE STORE

Ace Grand Lake and Ace Pastime El Cerrito

Unbeatable customer service! So friendly. I leave there happy. By contrast, I always leave Home Depot annoyed. — *phoeberry*

Pastime El Cerrito

I frequently walk in saying, "I have no idea if this solution exists, but can you think of a way to do X,Y or Z?" They've helped me McGyver numerous projects, and they seem to enjoy the challenge. Very knowledgeable and helpful staff. — *mrw*

Ace on Grand

Customer Service, yo! — *jdb390*

Not only does someone always offer to help you but they're RIGHT. — *Malina Jennifer*

Dutton Ave Ace Hardware in San Leandro

It has damn near everything for home repairs and the lady who runs it is a doll. — [illegible]

On 3rd Street Oakland, used to be ACE but it is not anymore

Super staff!!! Not Home Depot. — *andrewdeangelo*

BEST LAUNDROMAT

Wesley Wash and Fold

Miss Loddie Doddie Everybody is everybody's auntie! $1 a pound... and she is a bundle of sunshine. — *kayomo*

BEST GREEN DESIGN FIRM

Hyphae Design Lab

361 Henry St., Oakland, 510-922-9355, Hyphae.net

The East Bay is home to many a green-minded business, but perhaps none quite like West Oakland's Hyphae Design Lab. The five-member firm's tagline — "bridging the gap between architecture and biology" — is intriguing enough, but takes on added meaning when you see what these folks can do. Impeccable design and engineering skills, a penchant for innovation and problem-solving, and a deep-rooted dedication to long-term sustainability inform much of their work — like the 2,500-gallon rainwater collection tank they helped design for a customer in the Berkeley hills last year. It was Berkeley's first-ever permitted rainwater system designed for indoor use, but just another highlight for Hyphae's portfolio. More recently the firm has taken the lead in developing an innovative series of curbside swales designed to capture and filter storm-water runoff in West Oakland. All in a day's work, it seems.

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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST LINGERIE

A la Folie
Expensive, but so very drool-worthy — *sexyten*

Victoria's Secret
Her secret is that she has 47 ads — *[illegible]*

BEST MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Subway Guitars
It's everything the corporate music stores aren't. A great place to trade instruments and gear, get it repaired or get a custom guitar built for under $900. Sure, it wouldn't hurt if they vacuumed once a year but then again, my six-year old once made a sculpture out of junk she found on the floor in there. — *Snirk*

BEST MANICURES AND PEDICURES

My Amour Salon
I don't want to tell you Nicole is the best because then I'll never be able to get another appointment with her! — *femmegrrl*

Tranq'e on Grand — the original
These ladies will take out the belt sander if that's what it take to clean up those talons — *LaMaParland*

BEST MASSAGE

Stan Barrett
aka Butter Hands — *kihona*

BEST MEN'S CLOTHING

Crossroads in Rockridge
Good deals on cool clothes when you find them. Found a $20 bill in the pocket of jeans there too. Can't beat that! — *timetelling*

BEST PHARMACY

Pharmaca
Aside from their complete lack of parking. — *subgirl*

BEST CAMERA STORE

Looking Glass Photo

2848 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley, 510-548-6888, LookingGlassPhoto.com

In the age of the Internet, it's often tempting to rush online whenever the time comes to make a big purchase because the prices are typically difficult to beat. But local photographers should take pause before surfing on Amazon or Adorama: Looking Glass Photo is more than just a local photography shop: it's a place where a layman or a professional can go and get not only excellent service from its dedicated and knowledgeable staff, they can also get the guidance they need to find the lens or accessories they need. The greatest charm with this store, especially for those who don't have the cash to drop on an expensive lens, is the shop's lending program. This is invaluable, especially for any photographer who wants to try out a lens before making the financial commitment or who wants to play around with a lens for just a shoot or two.

BEST PLACE TO BUY FURNITURE

Chinatown Salvation Army

379 12th St., Oakland, 510-645-1860

If you're looking for something specific, or are the type to be picky about nicks, stains and tiny imperfections, move along. But if you're seeking slightly used but as-otherwise-fantastic-shape living, dining, and bedroom pieces for cheaper-than-cheap prices, the Chinatown Salvation Army might as well be Shangri-la: what looks and feels like acres of beds, bookshelves, tables, chairs and dressers, in a number of different styles, for prices that won't even buy you a paperweight at a non-used furniture shop. We're talking solid wood bookshelves for ten bucks each, double beds for $40, a stain-free couch for $45. As with all thrift stores, it's hit-or-miss and may require some patience, but the payoffs can be huge.

BEST ART SUPPLIES

Blick Art Materials

5301 Broadway, Oakland, 510-658-2787; 811 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-486-2600, DickBlick.com

There's probably an unspoken agreement between Blick employees and art school students: by now, walk in the door, hand them your class supply list, and follow them around with a cart as they toss the exact products in. The employees are pretty much that helpful: they could probably find your incredibly specific Old Holland Kolinsky sable paintbrush request with their eyes closed. Plus students get a discount, which comes in handy when facing that long, daunting list. But this store isn't just for art school kids. With easels, oil paints, ceramic supplies, and everything in between, the art store is a go-to spot for novices and retired painters alike. In addition, alongside the bunks of vine charcoal and various textured paper are selections of trinkets including cutesy erasers and bookmarks — perfect for that artsy friend who collects too much stuff. Or for yourself, of course.

BEST YOGA ACCESSORIES

Lululeman

2956 College Ave., Berkeley, 510-665-0418, Lululemon.com

Everyone knows who they are: those yogis who are as lean as the organic string beans they eat for breakfast, wearing their high-tech sweat-proof tank top and matching fold-over pants. Not that they need sweat-proof gear: these people don't perspire. Still, everyone wants to look like them, and thanks to Lululemon, they can. Founded in 1998 in Vancouver, Lululemon offers clothing and accessories for yogis and other athletes, relying on their trademarked fabrics including Luon and Luxtreme to wick away the sweat during even the hottest Bikram class. But the hook doesn't stop at tracksuits. This athletic store, now with loca-

Best animal lending library: Sulphur Creek Nature Center Chris Duffey

tions across the country, also offers sports bras, yoga mats, braided headbands and luxuriously shiny reflective visors. You may be sweating as you force your body into an uncomfortable triangle pose, but at least you'll look good in color-coordinated gear.

BEST ANIMAL LENDING LIBRARY

Sulphur Creek Nature Center

1801 D St., Hayward 510-881-6747 HaywardRec.org

Sometimes you just need to borrow an animal — nothing else will scratch that fluffy-furry-squeaky itch except temporary ownership. Thank goodness for Sulphur Creek Nature Center in Hayward. For just $15, you, too, can take home an animal for a week — a guinea pig, say, or a rat, or a hamster or a mouse. The center provides a cage, food, a bowl and water bottle, and a care sheet. And animal rentals are just the beginning at Sulphur Creek. The facility boasts a wildlife rehabilitation center as well, in which staff care for rescued animals that can't return to the wild because of injury, including owls, eagles, hawks, foxes, coyotes and snakes. Then there are also wildlife education classes led by naturalists or docents — interactive programs with live amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and arthropods. Who knows? If you ask politely, you might be able to hold a tarantula or feed meal worms to the chickens. Just make sure to wash your hands before you load your borrowed rat in the car.

BEST VINTAGE SHOES

James Rowland Shop

2447 Dwight Way, Berkeley, 510-848-8150, JamesRowlandShop.com

Usually, we're scared of used or vintage shoes. Dresses and sweaters? Sure, no problem. But shoes typically can't hide that aura of someone-stunk-these-up-for-days. That is, until we discovered James Rowland Shop. Having got its start on Etsy (where it still has a store), the business recently opened a small brick and mortar boutique near Telegraph Avenue. In addition to carrying a limited but very well curated selection of vintage (including some designer) clothes, its shoes are drool-worthy. Knee-high boots, ankle booties, granny boots, oxfords, huarache sandals, and more — all in very good condition — will leave you with many difficult decisions. We don't know where the buyers source these gems, but they clearly know what they're doing. Of course, style this discerning doesn't come cheap. But having a pair of one-of-a-kind shoes that are made better than new cheap imports? That's priceless.

BEST PLACE TO FIND A LAST-MINUTE OUTFIT

Jeremys

2967 College Ave., Berkeley, 510-849-0701 Jeremys.com

You've been invited to a summer barbecue, and you need a new cute outfit — fast. Where to go? You'll surely find something suitable (and discounted) at Jeremys, the last-season and salvage emporium that's become a haven for the fashionable set of the East Bay. If it's the weekend, you've got a fifty-fifty chance that the store is having a sale, which is good if you're looking for a deal, but not so good if your idea of a fun time doesn't include fighting hordes of shoppers (and their poor boyfriends) to snatch that last size six floral halter dress from Anthropologie you wanted last season but couldn't afford. This isn't shopping for those expecting boutique service or quality. But the joys of Jeremys is the thrill of the find — that designer item that doesn't appear to have any gaping holes or ripped seams — and is a fraction of the original price. Granted, that doesn't happen every day, but good things come to those who're persistent.

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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST PLANT NURSERY

Orchard Nursery in Lafayette, CA

Not orchard supply hardware — *Me*

The CW on 51st

We'll miss you... — *spuppa*

BEST POT DOCTOR

Whats the deal with all the hyper focus on weed??

Seriously expand your world, try staying sober for a week. — *Bau wow*

BEST SEX SHOP

Feelmore510

I cannot stress how good this store is. —*Spiceofmama*

Good Vibrations

I'm actually willing to go in this one. — *unsettling*

BEST SHOE STORE

The Left Step on San Pablo

Cyrus is incredibly helpful to those of us whose feet don't work in high heels. — *FrustratedTeacher*

BEST TOY STORE

Toy Safari, Alameda

Like the toy store of your childhood. I love that she won't stock toys she thinks are um, morally questionable. — *Inbana*

BEST T-SHIRTS

Oaklandish

Oakland pride in fabric form! — *Nicolas*

That place on Grand that isn't Oaklandish

Open random hours and inexpensive — *Moline, Jennifer*

BEST USED CLOTHING

Urbanity

Finally, a consignment store run by people with good taste! — *ouldini*

BEST VINTAGE CLOTHING

All Things Vintage

These ladies are having too much fun. What a great collection. — *Larson Sharyl*

Pretty Penny

I managed to dress up a girly guy there. — *Moline, Jennifer*

BEST WINE SHOP

Grocery Outlet Oakland

Great tasting wines and bargain prices. You cannot lose. — *Marabelle*

The Wine Mine

David is so nice and knowledgeable and always remembers me even if it has been months. Best deals in the Bay — *RodRaye*

BEST PLACE TO [illegible]

Slash

2840 College Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-7803, SlashDenim.com

The place where you went as a teenager to get vintage Levi's and surplus wear is now the place where you can find moderately priced denim from indie designers (and Levi's) that's sure to make your ass look hot. Though the focus here is on the skinny trend, Slash offers a wide selection of jeans for both men and women by brands such as It Jeans, Cheap Monday, and Kill City. The sales staff will help you find what you're looking for (or perhaps what you didn't know you were looking for) in a price range that works for you. Discounts during sales here are generous, and you just might snag a pair for $40. And if you've got a pair at home that's fading, Slash periodically does batch dye jobs for any item of clothing you bring in ($10 per pound). So you can keep your beloved denim dark, or just buy a new pair. Who knows, they could be your next new favorite.

BEST PLACE TO GET A HAIRCUT, NOT A SALES PITCH

Seven Salon

5356 College Ave., Oakland, 510-601-7778, Seven7Salon.com

Since opening a couple years ago, Seven Salon has swiftly and deservedly racked up accolades for its scalp massages (spine tingling in the best way possible), its haircuts (decently priced, consistently good), its stylists (well trained, not too chatty), and its refreshments (free, alcoholic). But here's what really makes Seven stand out. All this comes with nary a word about whatever new $40 bottle of chemicals and purified water you just need to have if you want your hair to get shinier/straighter/stronger/longer/happier/healthier/do whatever new thing we've now decided hair should do in addition to covering your head. Sure, the place is well stocked with products from the likes of Kerastase and Shu Uemura, and stylists are happy to help if you've got a question, but they'll never force something on you unsolicited, and you'll never feel like you're being backed into a corner. It's refreshing.

BEST of THE EAST BAY
REMIXED

BEST SELECTION OF GLUTEN-FREE GROCERIES

Alameda Natural Grocery

1650 Park St., Alameda, 510-865-1500, AlamedaNaturalGrocery.com

Yes, there's Whole Foods and Berkeley Bowl. (Don't get us started on Trader Joe's.) But for its size, Alameda Natural Grocery has an impressive and thoughtfully chosen selection of gluten-free goods — many of which are hard to find elsewhere. Cream of Buckwheat cereal? Check. Antioxidant dried fruit mix? Yep. Dairy-free Good Karma mud pie ice cream? Hell yes. It's not just that the store has gluten-free products. It's that they're incorporated seamlessly into the rest of the selection, so you don't have to feel ostracized by shopping in the "special-diet" aisle. But it's also carefully marked so you can easily pick out your gluten-free frozen pizza from the whole wheat variety. (And they don't mark stuff that's processed in the same facility as wheat as "gluten free," even if some manufacturers do.) Finding new and tasty gluten-free products can be challenging, but at Alameda Natural, you can trust that they've done the work for you.

Best Wine Guru

David Sharp at the Wine Mine

5427 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-547-9463, WineMineCo.com

Whether you're a casual wino, a committed oenophile, or more likely somewhere in between, David Sharp is exactly the kind of person you want at your side when buying wine. As the owner of the Wine Mine — the best shop of its kind in Temescal and quite possibly all of the East Bay — not only will he (non-pushily) offer guidance/advice/moral support as you attempt to wrap your head around his store's extensive, hand-picked selection, he will, invariably, be absolutely right. Better yet, he'll barely bat an eye even if you come at him with a comically low price point, a super specific request, or an impossibly vague and abstract conception of what you're looking for. Rumor has it he purposefully marks his bottles up less than the competition, and he and the store make a point of engaging the community, both by supporting local sports and school groups and by hosting weekly $1 wine tastings. As an extra special bonus, he keeps what must be the best store blog around, a frequently updated and disarmingly funny chronicle of his purchases, discoveries, and insights. Basically, this man is your new best friend.

BEST ACCESSORIES IN AN UNASSUMING LOCATION

Makin Endz Meet

398 17th St., Oakland

17th Street between Franklin and Webster is an odd mix of beat up-looking beauty-supply stores, hole-in-the-wall sandwich shops, tacky-looking clothing stores, and empty storefronts. It is not, in other words, the kind of retail corridor where you'd expect to find cheap and startlingly chic boots, jewelry, and bags — but that's exactly what Makin Endz Meet offers. The store is small — only big enough to handle two or three customers at a time, max — but well-curated, with vintage and new pieces for absurdly reasonable prices. And all this between a boarded-up storefront and a place where disembodied legs advertise two-for-one jeggings in a number of different animal prints. Go figure.

BEST WEB SITE FOR A LOCAL BUSINESS

CheeseboardCollective.Coop

It's rare that a web site manages to capture the true spirit of a business, but the Cheeseboard Collective's site does just that with its sketch-like animation, hand-drawn in pen and watercolor by the children's book author and illustrator Ann Arnold, who happens to live around the corner. Arnold's animation manages to capture the low-tech, neighborly vibe of the iconic cheese shop and pizza place with a quaint re-creation of a typical scene outside it: families chewing on bread, a man sitting and holding a steaming, animated cup of coffee, and a cute tail-wagging dog. Who knew zeroes and ones could be so freaking adorable?

BEST CANNABIS MERCHANDISING

Oaksterdam Gift Shop

485 15th St., Oakland, 510-836-4436, OaksterdamGiftShop.com

Every day, tourists and scholars from across the country arrive in Oakland's Uptown to visit the famed marijuana college Oaksterdam University. Founded in 2007 by activist Richard Lee, the for-profit, nonaccredited school took its name from the nickname given to downtown Oakland's pot shop district. Since then, a citywide crackdown has reduced the party to just four permitted dispensaries, yet Oaksterdam U thrives. In 2010, it dedicated a portion of its proceeds to funding Proposition 19, and news coverage helped solidify Oaksterdam into a new global brand, alongside the actual Amsterdam and Vansterdam (Vancouver). No surprise then that Oaksterdam Gift Shop has all the schwag a tourist could ask for: Frisbee golf discs, weed T-shirts, hats, steel belt buckles that double as weed grinders, and our favorites — green Oaksterdam Wayfarer sunglasses. Part of a constellation of properties that includes Oaksterdam University, a cannabis museum, Coffeeshop Blue Sky, and the Oaksterdam Glassworks, Oaksterdam Gift Shop doesn't disappoint.

BEST CANNABIS PHYSICIAN

Dr. Frank Lucido

2300 Durant Ave., Berkeley, 510-848-0958, DrFrankLucido.com

When a Winnebago pulls up in front of the Cow Palace in San Francisco on a sunny Saturday and unfurls a sign advertising "$45 medical marijuana recommendations or your money back," it's easy to see why some call the state's medical marijuana laws farcical. Sure, pot's less toxic than aspirin, and 90 percent of presenting patients are "self-medicating" anyway. And sure, almost none complain to the state medical board. But in an overweight country with skyrocketing health liabilities, there's something unseemly about a five-minute "doctor visit" that requires no medical records. What if something was actually wrong with you? Berkeley family practitioner Dr. Frank Lucido is a rare specimen: the diligent physician who understands weed. Serving the East Bay since the 1970s, Lucido will recommend marijuana to qualified patients but in a more professional process. Serious cannabis specialists like Lucido catch serious things like, in one case, a lingering fatigue that's actually early thyroid cancer. An activist for both medical marijuana patients and physician rights, Dr. Lucido fights in court and in the press to normalize the maligned herbal remedy. So when your aging parent eventually needs some killer arthritis cream, it needn't involve Winnebagos.

BEST DISPENSARY TECHNOLOGY

Harborside Health Center for iPhone/Android

Technology and cannabis — two Bay Area economic engines destined for a mashup in Harborside Health Center's new free app for iPhone and Android. The 80,000-member medical marijuana collective with 75 employees carries about 40 different kinds of buds alone and that's not including its immense varieties of hash, edibles, clones and merchandise. It's all a bit daunting. But this app offers the full Harborside menu with pictures. Killer Deals of the Day promise promotions like a "free gram with $150 purchase" to those who show their phone at checkout. No shock then that 45 percent of the app's users view it at least twice a day, as it's sometimes the only way to keep up on new arrivals like Platinum OG Clean Green (16-percent THC) or Blue Dream (18 percent), which can sell out in hours. An app calendar advertises Harborside wellness services like yoga and acupuncture, while a news section pipes in drug war issues and advertising from StopTheDrugWar.com. Still a little testy on iPod, the Harborside iPhone app is just a sniff of East Bay high technology to come.

BEST DISPENSARY LOUNGE

Berkeley Patients Group

2747 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-540-1928, BerkeleyPatientsGroup.com

Oakland's Harborside Health Center might have more selection, but Berkeley Patients Group takes home the prize for Best Dispensary Lounge in the East Bay. The eleven-year-old club with fewer than 10,000 patients recently renovated its facilities to increase patient satisfaction, adding copious parking for bikes as well as cars. Much of its intimidating razor-wire fencing has been removed and replaced with less ominous black gating, and well-tended succulents stud the entrance — part of a master beautification plan that's still underway. Inside, Berkeley Patients Group is actually a converted 1970s car dealership with wood flooring and a groovy vaulted glass showroom that looks out across the bustling intersection. Partitions separate check-in from the lounge where groups of aging hippies and young adults light up, chit chat, and hang out in the afternoon sun. Powerful fans suck up smoke, preventing the place from getting too funky. In the back, the club carries everything from award-winning, top-shelf Jack Frost to discount bags for patients on a tight budget.

BEST HALLUCINOGEN POSING AS DESSERT

On The Rise Fudge

Available at various local dispensaries

Local bakers report that East Bay medical marijuana patients have some of the country's highest tolerances for medical edibles. Consequently, the prize for best medical cannabis edible goes to mysterious company On the Rise and its fresh approach to that old staple — pot brownies. Available at licensed dispensaries like Harborside Health Center, Purple Heart Patient Center, and Berkeley Patients Group, On the Rise delivers a delicious, fiendishly strong line of fudge and gingerbread in a white, nondescript package. A three-to-six-dose On the Rise "9X" fudge chunk retails for $10, and includes 2.5 grams of cannabis. The four-to-eight-dose hunk costs $14 and contains 3.75 grams of pot — equivalent to an eighth ounce. Its $20 "bulk" fudge brick contains an unholy 7.5 grams of chronic. Danger, Will Robinson, danger! Salespeople warn all patients to go slow. Edibles can be great for relaxation or insomnia, but their effects take longer to appear and last for up to eight hours. Effects can also be more variable and significantly stronger than smoking weed. Still, operators across the East Bay report On the Rise flying off the shelves.

BEST HYDROPONICS STORE

Berkeley Indoor Garden

844 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-549-2918, BIGHydro.com

The medical cannabis industry is an estimated $1.3 billion a year cash crop in California these days, and an estimated 2.5 percent of Oakland properties have a chronic grow-op going. Fueling most of it is advanced hydroponics, which offers growers a semi-clandestine way to indoor garden by substituting rock wool or ceramic pellets for dirt. Add in irrigation, nutrients, timers, high-intensity discharge lighting, carbon dioxide generation, and ventilation, and it's even more complicated than it sounds. The folks at Berkeley Indoor Garden know what they're talking about, and they convey it with minimal 'tude, dude. In the business since the Eighties (before it was trendy), Berkeley Indoor Garden sports a comprehensive, well-priced selection of nutrients, lights, mediums, ballasts, and much more in a large warehouse on University Avenue. The space allows for low-profile re-ups, which is always a good thing. The super-knowledgeable, courteous staff has become a rarity in the cutthroat hydro supply biz these days. That's why aspiring Ed Rosenthals of all stripes continue to flock to this East Bay hydro shop.

BEST MEDICAL MARIJUANA LAB

Steep Hill Lab

1530 East 12th St., Oakland, 510-698-4448, SteepHillLab.com

It used to be that if you wanted to smoke pot, you smoked whatever you could get your hands on. Quality, safety, and potency was a matter of sight, smell, and to a certain degree taste. But that simply doesn't cut it in a regulated medical marijuana market. Consumers like to know exactly how strong a weed they're buying, and they want some assurances that it hasn't been doused in pesticides or colonized by insects or mold. Stepping into the white lab coat since 2008 is Oakland company Steep Hill Lab. Founded by two Northern California growers in an Emeryville apartment, the company has grown to become the premier cannabis tester in the West, with customers that include Harborside Health Center and

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Have known John for 50 years and he is the most supportive health professional I've ever had the pleasure to meet. He and his staff truly care about our humanity. I highly recommend his services!!! *—jazzyjumper*

LEAST WASTE PRODUCING BUSINESS
I don't have an answer *—ohmisha*

BEST CHILDREN'S RESALE STORE
Grove Street Kids
—Anne

BEST GROCERY STORE
Star Grocery
Owner-operated wonder *—rierat*

MOST NEGLECTED FARMERS' MARKET IN A BEAUTIFUL SETTING
Jack London Square on Sundays
—pheather

BEST COMMUNITY OR COMPLEX TO LIVE IN
The Bond @ Jack London Square
—traceuse

BEST MAGAZINE STORE
Issues
—wally

BEST PLACE TO GET YOUR CINDERELLA ON
Dress on College Ave., Oakland
The owner of this dress rental shop is amazing at helping you find just the right dress for that fancy party that nothing in your closet will work for. She's like that honest best friend that will tell you if it doesn't look right. If she could help my picky self she can help you. *—rasilo*

BEST MEN'S VINTAGE SHIRT & SHAVE SHOPPE
Henri Halbert
Bomb ass store. Check it out! Why don't they advertise in the East Bay Express by the way? *—sistasoulshine*

San Francisco Patient and Resource Center. It helped form the Association of California Cannabis Laboratories to promote best practices in the nascent, quasi-legal field, and it launched a SafeCannabis program that moves testing up the supply chain from the stores to the farms themselves. For doggedly pursuing the vision of a cleaner, safer stash, Steep Hill Lab is clearly the best medical marijuana lab in the East Bay.

BEST STRAIN

Grand Daddy Purple

Available at various local dispensaries

East Bay denizens have more medical marijuana choices than almost any population on the planet, with major local dispensaries carrying dozens of strains daily. Supplies across the Bay Area vary widely and turn over daily as growers bring in their latest and it quickly flies out the door. While patients continue to explore ever-more exotic hybrids and speedy sativas, there remains a strain that's endemic to and synonymous with Oakland, and that strain is Grand Daddy Purple. Known for its potent, purple, dense buds, sweet, candy smell and grape taste, Grand Daddy Purple is thought to be a Northern California remix of the strains Purple Urkel and Big Bud. It's also considered a pure indica that tests as high as 18 percent THC, which might explain why patients using it report profound relaxation, making it suitable for battling stress, managing cancer pain, or watching reality TV on Bravo. Widely available locally in clone form or online as seeds, it does great outdoors or indoors in soil or hydro. Local operators say the East Bay can't get enough of the "GDP."

BEST COFFEE SHOP THAT ALSO SELLS WEED

Coffeeshop Blue Sky

377 17th St., Oakland, 510-251-9690, CoffeeshopBlueSky.com

If you think about it, there are few things the East Bay treats with more reverence and obsession than coffee and marijuana. So in that sense, Blue Sky is something like the platonic realization of what makes Oakland great: a clean, well-kept little storefront that not only sells some of the best and cheapest legal bud around, but is also a full-fledged cafe in its own right, with a full menu of espresso drinks and pastries. Even if it didn't sell weed, this place would be a pleasant little coffeeshop. The drinks are cheap ($1 Americano!), the walls are painted in adorable/eponymous cloudy design, and the baristas are friendly if, uh, a little slow. But Blue Sky is, of course, also one of Oaksterdam's most venerable dispensaries, known for its reasonable prices, solid selection, and truly dank selection of edibles (try the caramel popcorn). Best of all, Blue Sky's cafe is open to patients and non-patients alike, meaning cardless plusones can grab a drink and sit down while their companions go to the back room — thereby avoiding the loitering-outside awkwardness you get at some other clubs. The entire operation's pretty low-key and unintimidating — according to employees, some people will buy their morning coffee there every day for weeks without figuring out why there's a security guard outside, the pastries are winkingly called "munchies," and all the staff is unbelievably chill. Bonuses: It's close to BART, rarely crowded, and boasts a decent selection of lighters, papers, and other paraphernalia. ●

People & Places

Chris Duffey

Best reappropriated space: The Great Wall of Oakland

BEST REAPPROPRIATED SPACE

The Great Wall of Oakland

West Grand Ave. between Broadway and Valley St., Oakland, GreatWallofOakland.org

If any city can find a use for a ten story brick wall hulking above a downtown parking lot, it's Oakland. Take that as a compliment. Oakland's first Friday Art Murmur hasn't been the same since the introduction of the 100-foot-by-100-foot Great Wall of Oakland, a creative reuse of unused urban space if ever there was one. Over the past three years it's been employed for a variety of artistic purposes, from projecting movies and short video clips and housing interactive light displays to serving as a vertical platform for fearless suspended dancers. Recognizing the wall's place as a permanent fixture on the ever-blossoming Oakland arts scene, several local artists took paintbrushes to the wall in April of this year, branding it for all to see in block letters against a neutral backdrop and above a colorful graffiti mural.

BEST CHEF

James Syhabout

Commis, Hawker Fare

It's not that James Syhabout brought home Oakland's first-ever Michelin star for Commis. It's not even strictly for Commis, where each dish reveals itself to be a complex switchbook juxtaposing subtle shades of flavor. Much as we admire Syhabout's work at Commis — not to mention his discipline and quietly workmanlike demeanor, taking a pass on those fickle promises of fame chefs so often succumb to, shedding their concentration to show up at New York galas or vaunt their genius in the Twittersphere — it was an altogether humbler project that made us realize just how much we admire Syhabout. With its uncompromising palate, its fearlessness about keeping the focus small, Hawker Fare is the kind of place only a chef who's confident in his impulses and committed to his craft could think about launching. Not only that: Given that Hawker Fare references the flavors Syhabout — whose family has roots in Northeast Thailand — remembers from his mom's kitchen right here in Oakland, and that Syhabout designed the place to be a restaurant even cash-strapped kids could afford, it feels both personal and generous. Let San Francisco chefs chase after glamour: Syhabout is Oakland to the bone.

BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO OAKLAND OFFICE DRONES EVER

The Broadway Shuttle

Last summer, when the City of Oakland announced its new Broadway shuttle, the concept alone was enough to generate palpable excitement: a free service, running roughly once every fifteen minutes during the workday from Jack London Square to Uptown. In essence, it meant the DTO's vast army of worker bees were no longer relegated to hitting up the same four sandwich joints day in and day out, nor were BART commuters with offices on the farther edges of downtown forced to walk to work through rain, wind, and other inclement weather. Execution-wise, the service definitely lived up to the hype: The Broadway Shuttle essentially represents a fitter, happier, more productive AC Transit alternate universe, one in which people are polite to each other and their drivers, presumably because they're grateful for the gift of a free ride. And, consequently, the shuttle's also home to hands-down the nicest drivers around — with a ridership considerably more well-behaved than those on the rest of the system. These drivers will wish you a nice day, actually stop when they see someone running frantically to catch the bus, and, if you're a regular, may even remember your name. Even better, the project's coordinators recently got a grant from the Alameda County Transportation Commission to keep the bus running until 1 a.m. on weekends.

BEST FIRST [illegible] DATE ACTIVITY

Tuesday Night Trivia at Ben 'N Nicks

5612 College Ave., Oakland; 510-923-0327, BenandNicks.com

Why meet the intriguing cutie you've been flirting with on OkCupid for a mere drink when you can meet for a drink and an intelligence test? Rockridge drinking institution Ben 'N Nicks hosts a lively but low-key trivia night every Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. (though you'll want to arrive a bit early to be sure to snag seats). With bartenders doling out generous pours and the evening's discussion topics literally handed to you by the trivia host — music, politics, current events, pop culture — there's unlikely to be a lower-stress first-date option out there. And if the date is a flop — although keep in mind that not everyone grew up crushing on Alex Trebek, and that that's actually a very good thing — perhaps you'll find the right answer to your romantic quest across the bar.

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST APPROPRIATED PUBLIC SPACE

19th and Telegraph

Thanks to pedestrian advocates, 19th and Telegraph will soon become a temporary outdoor sculpture garden instead of a parking lot! — *dio gso*

Dover Park

This space has benefited from all kinds of guerrilla gardening to add drought tolerant plants, Healthy Hearts / Phat Beets growing produce and the result has been all kinds of neighbors fully using the space — fitness walks in the a.m., movie nights in the summer and kids all day. — *cef*

BEST CHARITY

Alternatives to Violence Project/East Bay

Trains folks to go into California jails and prisons and do conflict resolution training — there are thousands of prisoners on waiting lists hoping to take these workshops. — *permakinhart*

BEST COLLEGE PROFESSOR WITH A SIDE CAREER

Amir Jaleenvary

Owns a car wash — *rgplount*

Heron Hanfeld

Sociologist and painter — *anrahblow*

BEST COMMUNITY GARDEN

Strong Roots

On Woolsey and Sacramento in Berkeley. There's a hammock and they sometimes play movies up on the giant billboard that's in the garden from a projector. — *Russell LB*

BEST COMPANY TO WORK FOR

Alameda County

Still treats employees as assets. — *Jgm*

Self-employed

Why work for someone else when you can work for yourself and be your own boss. — *Marcknic*

VenueTech

Seriously, go check them out. They do good things for the Bay Area. — *rytesidno*

BEST PICK-UP SPOT

Lake Merritt

566 Bellevue Ave., Oakland, OaklandNet.com/parks/parks/lakemerritt.asp

Smack dab in the middle of downtown, Lake Merritt naturally attracts lots of city dwellers. It's a classy place, thanks to gondola rides and the "Necklace of Lights" draped around the 3.4-mile shoreline. It also has the most options for scoping out date prospects, with flocks of people walking the loop around the lake, jogging, and flying kites. The park also includes large expanses of well manicured grass, perfect for lying out while pretending to read some intellectual book (care to make even the most uninformed look bright) or having a picnic after the weekly Grand Lake farmers' market. But ultimately, Lake Merritt is a place for those wanting to get out and meet people — enjust look.

BEST GARDEN TO TAKE A DATE TO

The Berkeley Rose Garden

1200 Euclid Ave., Berkeley

With views of San Francisco Bay and hundreds of roses dotting the various well kept paths and an amphitheater-style layout with levels of luscious flowers, this Berkeley hills hangout is flush with roses of all varieties, sizes, shapes and colors. Then, there are trails off to the sides of the flower beds, perfect for wandering on a quiet sunny afternoon. If you're seeking more activity, there's also a tennis court adjacent to the park and Codornices Park across the street, complete with a playground and concrete slides — perfect for when your date hits a low point in conversation.

BEST PLACE TO WALK AMONG THE DEAD

Mountain View Cemetery

5000 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, MountainViewCemetery.org

Unless you're dead, recruiting, or a high school aged goth, a cemetery probably isn't the first place you'd think to hang out at on a sunny day. But there's something about the Mountain View Cemetery that invites a demographic that is very much alive. On any given day, the 220-acre cemetery serves as a backdrop for dog walkers, joggers, teenagers and twenty-somethings with an affinity for loitering on mausoleum steps, and those curious spectators who want to see some of the historic gravesites that fill the late-19th-century cemetery. Chocolate king Domingo Ghirardelli is buried there, as is the "Big Four" giant Charles Crocker and the American novelist Frank Norris. There's something calming about walking along the cemetery's twisting pathways and hills, among its aging headstones and bubbling fountains contemplating life and death among thousands of people who ask nothing of you other than to respect their places of rest.

Readers Poll Winners

BEST APPROPRIATED PUBLIC SPACE
Lake Merritt

BEST CHARITY
Alameda County Community Food Bank

BEST COLLEGE PROFESSOR WITH A SIDE CAREER
Michael Pollan

BEST COMMUNITY GARDEN
Oakland Rose Garden and Emeryville Community Garden (tie)

BEST COMPANY TO WORK FOR
Pixar

BEST COMEBACK BY REIMAGINED NEIGHBORHOOD
Temescal

BEST GRASSROOTS POLITICAL MOVEMENT
Legalization

BEST K-12 TEACHER
Russell Wright, Walden School

BEST LOCAL ACTIVIST
Van Jones

BEST LOCAL IDEA
Urban Farming, Sing Thing, Three Stone Hearth, and Oaklandish (tie)

BEST LOCAL INNOVATOR
Stephen DeAngelo

BEST MIXED-USE BUILDING
David Brower Center

BEST MOTORCYCLE GANG
East Bay Rats

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD
Temescal

BEST NEW CAUSE
Save Oakland Libraries

BEST PICK-UP SPOT
Heart and Dagger Saloon, Bar Three Fifty-Five, The Layover, and Whole Foods (tie)

BEST PLACE TO DO TWO THINGS AT ONCE
Lake Merritt

BEST PLACE TO HANG OUT
Lake Merritt

BEST PLACE TO TAKE THE KIDS
Children's Fairyland

BEST REMIXED RELIGIOUS SERVICE
East Bay Church of Religious Science

BEST REMODELED PARK
Lake Merritt

BEST SUBVERSION OF A TRADITIONAL EVENT
Oktoberfest in the Dimond

BEST [illegible] HANGOUT
924 Gilman

BEST YOUTUBE CELEBRITY
Ashkon Davaran and Kreayshawn (tie)

BEST LOCAL INNOVATION

Berkeley Bionics

BerkeleyBionics.com

Any lover of science-fiction movies will remember *Aliens*, the frightening 1986 movie about bug-like creatures who overrun a deep-space colony by infesting the colonists and the subsequent battle between corporate space marines led by Ellen Ripley (Sigourney Weaver). There's this scene at the end where Ripley uses a powered exoskeleton (a device worn by a person) to fight the alien queen. Awesome! Anyway, that's the scene that comes to mind after reading about the work going on at Berkeley Bionics. The company, founded in 2005, created the world's first exoskeleton brought to market — the BLEEX (Berkeley Lower Extremity Exoskeleton) — allowing a user to carry up to 75 pounds. Recent exoskeletons developed for the military allow the user to carry up to 200 pounds and operate on any type of terrain or slope. The Berkeley company has also expanded to medical work, creating the eLEGS, an exoskeleton for wheelchair-bound patients that allows them to walk. Twenty-five years after *Aliens*, science fiction looks a bit more real ... alien queen excluded (thankfully).

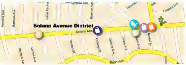
BEST HIDDEN ZEN

Japanese Garden

22373 N. Third St., Hayward; 510-881-6715, HaywardRec.org

For a bit of Zen in the midst of suburbia, there's nothing like the Japanese Garden in Hayward. Originally the site of the agricultural studies program at Hayward High School (from 1913 to 1952, that is), the park was the first Japanese-style garden established in California. Set on more than three acres of Japanese and native California trees, rocks and plants is a koi pond (also home to smaller fish and turtles), a teahouse and a chain of viewing pavilions, one of which extends over the water. Enter the garden via a rustic wooden arch and stroll the paved paths admiring fine specimens of cypress, ivy, ornamental Japanese maple, even both bushes shaped just so. At the center of the garden you'll find a polished stone friendship monument dedicated to Funabashi, Hayward's sister city in Japan. A spin around the garden is a great way to, as the Japanese say, *kuchou*

What's Happening
On Solano Ave.



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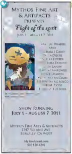
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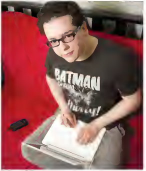
Best budding Twitterer: Louis Peitzman.

courtesy

fuugetsu — roughly meaning "to appreciate the beauties of nature." In doing so, you may learn something about yourself.

MOST INFLUENTIAL IDEA

Edible Schoolyard

1781 Rose St., Berkeley, 510-558-1335, EdibleSchoolyard.org

It's become fashionable among foodies of a certain stripe to bash *Chez Panisse* — to say the food there is boring or dated or whatever. But regardless of what you think of that venerable Berkeley institution, there's no disputing that, on the whole, Chez Panisse founder Alice Waters' "food revolution" is still picking up steam, extending its reach far beyond the Bay Area restaurant scene. And among all of Waters' cultural contributions, perhaps none is more important than the Edible Schoolyard, the groundbreaking school garden and kitchen program based at Berkeley's Martin Luther King Middle School. As the country faces a childhood obesity epidemic of devastating proportions, the core of the idea behind Edible Schoolyard is simple: Even kids raised on Big Macs and processed chicken products will *happily* eat a healthy home-cooked meal if they planted and picked the carrots and the peas themselves — if they did the chopping and the dicing, if they stirred the pot, if they sprinkled on the spice.

BEST BUDDING TWITTERER

Louis Peitzman

Twitter.com/LouisPeitzman

Depending on who you ask, Twitter may or may not be fomenting revolutions, changing the fundamental nature of human interaction, and/or contributing to the downfall of the human race. This, however, is for certain: The microblogging service is making it a hell of a lot easier to give and receive LOLs. In terms of local talent, easily the most promising is Louis Peitzman, a Berkeley-based freelance writer who's garnered some 4,000-plus followers with his 140-character observations on life ("Don't you hate it when you're trying to text and you hit every green light?"), pop culture ("they should make a movie with Katy Perry and Russell Brand and film it on an island and then run the movie and let's leave them there"), and the medium itself ("I just wasted so many potential tweets in casual conversation. :("). Already more than 18,100 tweets deep, Peitzman knows how to use the medium to cultivate a distinct comedic voice — in his case, a sort of gayer Berkeley-er more ce-

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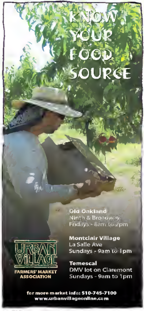

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lebrity-savvy Woody Allen type: neurotic and painfully self aware but in a way that's funny rather than sad. (To wit, his bio: "I'm scared of most things, but I feel secure knowing the rhythm is never going to get me.") Follow him; you won't regret it.

MOST INFLUENTIAL CAL ENERGY CZAR

Dan Kammen

United States Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, former professor of physics and biology at UC Berkeley and director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, has been called our country's green-energy czar. Last fall another avowed advocate of alternative energy from Cal followed in Chu's footsteps to Washington, but not to work for the government. Instead, Dan Kammen, a professor of energy and public policy on campus and an internationally renowned expert on alternative energy, went to work for the World Bank. Kammen provides strategic leadership on World Bank energy policy and operations around the globe and may just be the entire world's green energy czar. His goal is to help establish the bank — which lends an average of $8 billion every year for energy projects — as a world leader in renewable energy and energy efficiency while moving global energy development down a cleaner and more sustainable path. No simple task, but we trust he's up to it.

BEST EMPTY-LOT CONVERSION

Garden Hortica

668 7th St., Oakland, 510-882-3390, GardenHortica.com

Plenty of folks have ingenious ideas for reclaiming abandoned urban lots. But few actually see those ideas through, and even fewer end up turning a blighted, trash-strewn sight into a viable business. That's exactly what Garden Hortica did with its small, wedge-shaped lot at the corner of Castro and 7th streets just outside downtown Oakland. Formerly a bare, forgotten plot near Highway 980 (check Google Maps for evidence), 668 7th Street is now a paean to water-wise garden design. The nursery specializes in cacti, succulents, natives, and drought-tolerant plants from around the world. You'll find a nice array of all types arranged on-site as a virtual art installation: Garden Hortica's eye is geared as much toward proper plant choice as it is toward ideal placement. The meeting of the two makes for horticultural magic. At the 2011 San Francisco Flower and Garden Show, the company's booth beat out two hundred other exhibitors to win an award for outstanding visual presentation.

BEST COMMUNITY-LED PARK REMODEL

Maxwell Park

4618 Allendale Ave., Oakland, 510-238-7275, OaklandNet.com/Parks

It's no secret that Oakland has little money to maintain its parks these days, let alone upgrade them. Leave that to residents and community organizations, which play an increasingly important role in the upkeep and improvement of their local parks. Among the most active is Friends of Maxwell Park, which over the last three years has put untold hours into cleaning up the 1.4-acre Maxwell Park in the East Oakland neighborhood of the same name. Previously, the park was a haven for drug use and dealing, loitering, littering, and other activities hardly conducive to family recreation. Now, after the group has tackled weeding, new plantings and landscaping, lighting, trash cleanup, and tiling the outdoor restroom walls in artful mosaics, it's much better off. Next up is a complete reworking of the park's layout: the group hopes to use grant money to commission and eventually implement a safer and more useful design.

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST COMPLETELY RE-IMAGINED NEIGHBORHOOD

Dimond District
New murals, new mosaics, new shops, and a beautiful park a couple of blocks from the business district. — *Bubble*

Temescal
Best food of all gentrified neighborhoods — *Alisha*

BEST K-12 TEACHER

Mr. Fong-Wedgwood, Edison Elementary, Alameda
How can one teacher be so constantly friendly and good-natured? She knows my kids by name and they were not even in her classes. — *Jsharat*

There are too many to single one out!
Let's celebrate ALL teachers who pour their hearts into their work day in and day out, despite dwindling resources and the current wave of teacher-bashing. — *FrustratedTeacher*

BEST LOCAL ACTIVIST

Michael Davis
Keep the Arts Oakland! — *[illegible]*

Tina Ramos
Oakland Grown what what! — *Collie_Wing*

BEST LOCAL IDEA

Roof Gardens
Because we did it first with the Kaiser garden! — *RedRage*

Smoke weed every day
— *DoeRayDee*

Tax the rich, everything else is bullshit
— *[illegible]*

BEST LOCAL INNOVATOR

Adam Lamoreaux
Brewer and Owner of Linden Street Brewery — *dre347*

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST MOTORCYCLE GANG

East Bay Rats
They're so profitable. It makes me feel like the '70s all over again. — *hajime*

Miscreants
Nicest group of tough guys ever! — *cangioloz*

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD

Dimond
Great park, great local library, Farmer Joes, great Oktoberfest... — *strechblair*

Old Oakland
Oakland's best kept secret...shhhh! — *queenofbrown*

Northbrae!
Monterey Market, Hopkins Street Bakery, Gioia's, Magnani's butcher and Tokyo Fish Shop just a few blocks away on San Pablo! Then there's all the shops on Gilman. A foodie's dream! — *makuro_kerobe*

BEST PLACE TO HANG OUT

First and Last Chance Saloon patio
It's somehow magically protected from the wind. — *Molina, Jennifer*

Willard Park
It's like a [illegible]! — *Ilikemindedpeople*

BEST PLACE TO TAKE THE KIDS

Adventure Playground
Totems adventures — *Ilikemindedpeople*

Fairyland
Fairyland is a place where you go as a child and remember all the great, yet creepy old run-down theme park memories. But the problem is once you get too old, they don't allow you back in to reminisce, UNLESS YOU HAVE A KID. So as an adult, this is the best place to take the kids, otherwise they won't let you in. — *Nicholas Wong*

Jelly Pinball
Kept two dozen kids busy at once — *torihorse*

Tilden Park
Big kids love the steam trains too. — *Molina, Jennifer*

BEST COLLEGE PROFESSOR WITH A [illegible] HOBBY

David Bernstein of Mills College

When Mills College professor David Bernstein wants to get away from it all, he really does it. The professor of music is also an avid rock climber, having explored mountains all over the country including the North Face of the Grand Tetons in Wyoming. In addition to his excursions scaling the sides of mountains, Bernstein also enjoys bicycling and other outdoor activities. And his love for exploring nature plays into his work as a music scholar, giving Bernstein inspiration when he's starting a new book on composers like John Cage and Pauline Oliveros: the music theory aficionado once wrote an introduction while on a climbing expedition. As the prior head of the music department and having spent more than twenty years teaching at Mills, the occasionally-green true professor proves that there's always time to get into the wild.

BEST COMPLETELY [illegible] NEIGHBORHOOD

The Laurel District

LaurelDistrictAssociation.org

The Laurel District is one of those often overlooked Oakland neighborhoods just waiting to be noticed. Situated in East Oakland where MacArthur Boulevard intersects High Street and 35th Avenue, the area offers a variety of shops, restaurants, and hangouts. Farmer Joe's anchors the district, and dining highlights include Cambodian fare at Phnom Penh House and Italian cuisine at Trattoria Laurellina. There's Laurel Bookstore, one of the best neighborhood bookshops in the city, and you can also sip on fair trade organic coffee and savor just-pressed panini while surfing the web for free at World Ground Cafe. The Laurel also offers a weekly farmers' market every Saturday, and to top things off, the Laurel District Association, a nonprofit organization that promotes the neighborhood, hosts an annual street fair where local businesses can give people a taste of all the Laurel District has to offer.

BEST PLACE TO EXPLORE

Oakland Chinatown

Oakland's Chinatown may not have the touristy draw of the one across the bay, but there's much to be rewarded for those willing to push up their sleeves and explore. The best way to do so is on foot, as the diagonal crosswalks make this place a pedestrian's paradise (plus car traffic can get gnarly). You'll find the freshest, cheapest dumplings and stores packed floor to ceiling with ornate slippers — all for very little money. Grocery shopping can get a bit crowded at times, with dozens of people hovering over outdoor selections crammed onto sidewalks, but perseverance pays off. You can pick up fresh herbs, spices, and produce that are hard to find anywhere else. Plus the offerings go beyond China — you'll find specialty foods from Vietnam, Korea and Japan, as well. Don't leave without a fresh Vietnamese *banh mi* sandwich from Cam Huong on Webster Street.

BEST PLACE TO REST YOUR SPIRIT

San Damiano Retreat

710 Highland Dr., Danville, 925-837-9141, SanDamiano.org

Compared to say, New Yorkers, Bay Area folks are pretty laid-back. But there's always room for more R&R, and taking off for a week-end retreat can work wonders on one's state

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Thursday, September 15

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Thursday, September 29

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Categories We Didn't Think Of

BEST LOCAL ANIMAL

My cat!

— SativaBelieva

BEST MAYOR

Jean Quan

Who's proving the doubters wrong? *— Cat's Meow*

BEST URBAN SILHOUETTE

The Port of Oakland cranes!

— bootimus

BEST UP-AND-COMING NEIGHBORHOOD

Jack London Square

— annahang

BEST UNKNOWN PANORAMA OF DOWNTOWN OAKLAND

9th floor of Alameda County parking structure at 12th and Madison

Take the publicly accessible elevator to the 9th floor, preferably before 8:30 a.m. or after 5 p.m. when the cars are gone. You can walk down the spiral ramp and get a spectacular near-360-degree panorama of downtown, Alameda, Lake Merritt and the Oakland hills. *— kgr*

BEST IDEA

Making everything bike friendly

Cafes, [illegible], clubs, nights on the town, shops, fundraisers ... we make it all cool to arrive there on your bike *— Pedinoff, Roberto*

BEST PLACE TO VIEW THE MOON RISE

Berkeley's Marina Park

The best spot to view the moon as it rises in all its glory over the East Bay Hills *— Wally Barry*

BEST PLACE TO HAVE SEX IN PUBLIC

Lake Merritt at night. Just sayin'

— RedRage

BEST PLACE TO HAVE MOVED HERE FROM

Anywhere.

— DrSeum

BEST PLACE TO GO FOR FREE LEGAL SERVICES

East Bay Community Law Center

— arianaj

BEST LOCAL POLITICIAN

Sandre Swanson

— FrustratedTeacher

of mind. Here's where San Damiano Retreat comes in: Nestled in the hills of the San Ramon Valley in Danville, San Damiano was founded on Franciscan principles but welcomes people of all different faiths and backgrounds. Built in classic California mission style, the main building houses a fireside lounge, library, conference rooms, a dining room, chapel, and 78 spare but welcoming remodeled rooms. Visitors can spend a weekend on private retreat — with the option of spiritual direction with one of the friars — or join one of the center's many offerings, which can include retreats on dreams, recovery, the spirituality of aging, or ecology. Let the gentle splashing of the central fountain soothe you, or take a tour of the Canticle garden's labyrinth, lovingly nurtured by volunteers. Who knows? Maybe out of the quiet will come that lightning bolt of spiritual insight that's been eluding you all these years.

BEST POLITICIAN WITH AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIENCE

Andy Katz

Andy Katz is an environmental wonk's wonk. The East Bay MUD board member may know more about climate change regulations, air-pollution standards, and the importance of urban density than any other elected official in Northern California. He's a clean air attorney and public-health advocate for Breathe California and is chair of Sierra Club California. And the Berkeley resident is consistently on the right side of important issues and controversies. He was the leading voice on the East Bay MUD board against the ill-advised — and massive — dam proposed for the Mokelumne River in the Sierra Foothills. The project, before it was blocked by the courts, would have ruined a spectacularly beautiful wildlife habitat and a scenic stretch of the river popular for its fishing, kayaking, and swimming. Katz also has been a consistent voice for water conservation and for levying steep penalties for residents who waste copious amounts of water on their swimming pools, sprawling lawns, and vanity vineyards.

BEST ENVIRONMENTALIST

Jeff Miller

At times, Jeff Miller is so active, he seems to be everywhere at once. If he's not trapsing through the Sunol wilderness trying to protect tule elk, eagles, and steelhead, he's in the Delta fighting to protect salmon and smelt, or he's up in Humboldt County trying to block the destruction of redwood forests. He's also very effective, which, when you get down to it, is what you want from an environmentalist. Just last month, his group, the Alameda Creek Alliance, won a court judgment, blocking Caltrans' plans to cut down hundreds of trees along Alameda Creek in order to widen Highway 84. The road project threatened a steelhead run that Miller has worked tirelessly over the past decade trying to restore. And then earlier this month, another group he works with, the Center for Biological Diversity, won a court ruling that blocks Caltrans' attempts to widen Highway 101 in Humboldt because the project threatens old-growth redwoods in Richardson Grove State Park. In short, if you're a public agency, especially Caltrans, you don't wanna mess with Jeff Miller.

MOST ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT

Ali Kashani and Mark Rhoades

It wasn't that long ago that housing developers were the bad guys in the eyes of many environmentalists. But in the era of climate change, in which the growth of cities has become paramount in order to curb suburban sprawl and gas-guzzling commutes, environmentalists are increasingly viewing urban housing developers differently — especially the ones that do it right. Take Ali Kashani and Mark Rhoades and their East Bay company, CityCentric Investments. Now, many developers might argue — rightfully — that any type of dense urban housing development next to mass transit is green. But Kashani and Rhoades, a former Berkeley city planner, are taking it to a whole other level. They're aiming to make their Parker Place housing development the largest privately developed project to ever receive LEED platinum certification in Berkeley history. The project also gets credits for adaptive reuse. It will use the facade of the old Berkeley Honda building, designed in 1923 by noted architect James Plachek, who also designed Berkeley City Hall. No wonder Parker Place faced almost no opposition and won approval in record time from Berkeley's infamously byzantine permitting process.

MOST VIGILANT COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

Don Mitchell

When demolition crews finally knocked down the long-shuttered Oak Knoll Naval Hospital earlier this year, there was one person who deserved more credit than anyone else for finally ridding Oakland of that dilapidated eyesore. In fact, Don Mitchell, leader of the Sequoyah Hills and Oak Knoll Neighborhood Association, spent much of the past few years helping lessen the immense dangers presented by the former Navy property in the Oakland hills. He went after SunCal, the owner of the land, and its bankrupt ex-financial partner, Lehman Brothers. And his relentless efforts helped prompt then-City Attorney John Russo to file suit to clean up the property, which was choked with toxic asbestos and overgrown vegetation, a fire disaster waiting to happen. He also pointed out that the Oakland Fire Department had worsened potential fire hazards when it cut large holes in the roofs of city-owned buildings on the property for training exercises — a move that would have hastened the spread of fire had a blaze broken out. In short, not much went unnoticed by Mitchell, not even the Oakland zoo employees who secretly, and illegally, cut down trees from public property to feed to the zoo's elephants and giraffes.

MOST REGIONALLY MINDED MAYOR

Tom Bates

Most mayors spend their time worrying only about their respective cities. "Can I increase city tax revenue, and hire more cops if I can entice Target to come here instead of El Cerrito?" Or, "What tax breaks can I offer that new solar start-up to open up shop in my town instead of Emeryville?" But Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates views his role from a wider perspective. Sure, he spends a lot of time trying to make Berkeley better, but as an environmentalist, he also sees his mission as promoting the growth of the urban East Bay while slowing suburban sprawl. And as a social justice activist, he often advocates for funding for urban transit that serves lower-income commuters, instead of transportation projects that benefit the wealthy. And to make a difference, he's become a leader on the boards of both the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. He may be the only mayor in the East Bay who fully realizes that for the area to remain vibrant in the future, he must think regionally and not parochially.

MOST DEDICATED CAMPAIGN VOLUNTEER

James Vann

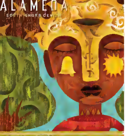
Imagine that you're running for office and you have a campaign volunteer who was willing to walk hundreds of miles, knocking on doors and talking to strangers to get you elected. How could you lose, right? Well, Jean Quan had a volunteer like that — James Vann — and he's one of the reasons why she shocked the Bay Area political world last November and defeated one of California's most well-known politicians, Don Perata, in the Oakland mayor's race. Of course, Quan had about 1,000 campaign volunteers last year, which has to be an East Bay record, but none worked harder than Vann, except maybe Quan's husband, Floyd Huen. For nearly a year, Huen and Vann traversed the city on foot. They reached two-thirds of Oakland's precincts, chatting up residents and convincing them to put Quan on their ranked-choice ballots. "It was clear to us that the race was going to be won with second- and third-place choices," Vann told the *Express* in a post-election interview. They were right. And they walked more than 200 miles to prove it.

BEST PAST LIFE REGRESSION GUIDE

Christine Bartlett, PT, CHT

Better Life Teaching and Counseling Center
2515 Milvia St. #3, Berkeley, 510-418-1948

So the old man is driving you crazy? It's probably because it's not your first go-round together — you've been in each other's hair for eons. At least that's what Christine Bartlett might say after a transpersonal hypnotherapy session (i.e., past life regression) at the Better Life Teaching and Counseling Center in Berkeley. A hypnotherapist since 1998, Bartlett specializes in addictions, career and life changes, dream analysis, spirituality, and connection with one's own inner guidance. Inside her softly lit, cozy office, clients can sink into the tweedy La-Z-Boy and pull a blanket onto their lap as Bartlett explains what she does clearly enough to put the inexperienced at ease. Even those who are convinced they will not succumb to hypnosis find themselves sinking into deeper levels of consciousness with no trouble. Sure, you may never be able to prove whether you and your beloved actually ran a farm together on the American frontier in the 1800s, but as metaphor, the "memory" may help you release some of those stuck emotions that make relationships feel, well, crazy sometimes. ●



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Saturday, July 23, 2011
Flight Night Around

Saturday, July 30, 2011
Summer Breeze Connection Around

Saturday, August 6, 2011
Blues Bazaar

Saturday, August 13, 2011
Town Hip Hop

Saturday, August 20, 2011
GLEE Weekend Back-to-School

Saturday, August 27, 2011
Young Songwriters Workshop & Conce

Saturday, September 3, 2011
Labor Day Weekend
3pm–5pm
5pm–7pm

AlamedaSouthShoreCe

Restaurants & Bars

Best over the top izakaya: Ippuku.

Chris Duffey

BEST OVER THE TOP IZAKAYA

Ippuku

2130 Center St., Berkeley 510-665-1969, IppukuBerkeley.com

While the Bay Area has its share of izakayas (pub-like hangouts ideal for sipping, snacking, and relaxing), Ippuku is a place apart. The dark, dazzling raw concrete/recycled wood setting features a traditional bamboo-screened lantern-lit *kotatsu* (dining area) with low tables and comfy footwells. The bar offers 42 distinct varieties of draft and bottled *shochu* on the rocks, cut with hot or cold water, or served in a mix-it-yourself highball. And skewered variety meats, not raw fish or sizzling steak, is the specialty of the house. The heart, liver, tail, and gizzards of pasture-raised Soul Food Farms chickens are rich, smoky, and delectable, but don't pass up the Berkshire pork belly with sugary soy paste, the tender, juicy Wolfe Ranch quail, half a dozen crunchy little head-to-tail smelt, or (for the vegetarians) the buttery corn on the cob or the yuzu-glazed shiitakes. Other unique nibbles include bitter melon tempura, bacon-wrapped mochi, avocado sashimi, and cream cheese with skipjack tuna innards (an acquired taste). The *mocha* sundae (green tea soft serve with *mochi*, red bean paste, and tempura flakes) makes a perfect over-the-top meal-closer.

BEST SUBVERTED TAKE ON A CLASSIC

Trout BLT at Sea Salt

2512 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley 510-883-1720, SeaSaltRestaurant.com

As much as we enjoy a traditional BLT — especially in late summer, when tomatoes are at their peak — the idea of a Bacon, Lettuce, and Idaho Trout sandwich is quite simply a stroke of genius. At Berkeley's Sea Salt, they take crisp bacon, herbaceous arugula, a perfectly pan-fried fillet of skin-on Idaho trout and — the real kicker — slow-roasted tomatoes (delicious even out of season) and put it all on a soft torpedo roll. The result is as perfectly balanced and addictive a sandwich as you're ever likely to taste. The invention of former-chef Anthony Paone, the trout BLT is still a standby on Sea Salt's oft-changing menu and we're pleased to report that it's still sublime. In the general category of updated (and transcendent) versions of classic sandwiches, Sea Salt has also been known to serve a mean eel banh mi.

BEST REMIXED SNACK FOOD

Siamese Peanuts at Hawker Fare

2300 Webster St., Oakland, 510-832-8896, HawkerFare.com

James Syhabout's Siamese peanuts will make you forget Cracker Jack ever existed and, possibly, that other *food* ever existed. They're salty-sticky-sweet-savory all at once, roasted and tossed with sugar, chili spices, and shrimp paste for a flavor that's fishy and funky and pungent and like nothing you've ever tasted. This is Hawker Fare doing what Hawker Fare does best: flavorful, layered, occasionally unexpected Asian street food, served in an unpretentious setting and with a premium on intense flavor and unfussy preparations. Also, and very importantly: these peanuts are only $3. Run, don't walk.

BEST WAY TO CLOG YOUR ARTERIES

Oxtail Poutine at Chop Bar

247 4th St. #111 Oakland, 510-834-2467 OaklandChopBar.com

Popularized by Montreal fast-food joints and the (usually drunk) people who love them, poutine is, at its most basic, French fries stuffed into a paper cone and covered with gravy and cheese curds. In other words, it is literally *deep-fried carbohydrates covered in two different kinds of animal fat*. And as such, nobody needed to make it more decadent. But the folks from Chop Bar, bless their hearts, did it anyway. The

Readers Poll Winners

BEST AFRICAN RESTAURANT
Café Colucci

BEST BAR
Heart and Dagger Saloon

BEST BARBECUE
Everett and Jones

BEST BARTENDER
Samantha Beran at Lucky 13

BEST BREAKFAST/BRUNCH
Bette's Oceanview Diner

BEST BURGERS
Barney's Gourmet Hamburgers

BEST CHINESE RESTAURANT
Shan Dong

BEST CAFE
Local 123

BEST COCKTAILS
Flora

BEST COFFEE
Peet's

BEST DELI
Genova Delicatessen and Ravioli

BEST DESSERTS
La Farina

BEST FOOD AT A BAR
César

BEST FUSION CUISINE/ RESTAURANT
Vanessa's Bistro

BEST GAMES/ACTIVITIES AT A BAR
The Albatross

BEST GLUTEN-FREE PRODUCTS
Mariposa Bakery

BEST HEALTHY FAST FOOD
Nature's Express

BEST INDIAN/PAKISTAN RESTAURANT
Vik's Chaat Corner

BEST ITALIAN RESTAURANT
Dopo

BEST ICE CREAM
Ici

BEST JAPANESE/SUSHI RESTAURANT
Kirala

BEST JUKEBOX AT A BAR
Heart and Dagger Saloon

BEST KARAOKE BAR
Jaguar Karaoke

BEST KOREAN RESTAURANT
Ohgane Korean Restaurant

BEST LOCALLY SOURCED/ ORGANIC MENU
Gather

BEST MIDDLE EASTERN RESTAURANT
Holy Land

BEST MIXOLOGIST
Travis Dutton at Bar Three Fifty-Five

BEST MOBILE FOOD CART/ TRUCK
Cupkates

BEST NEW BAR
Bar Three Fifty-Five

BEST NEW RESTAURANT
Homeroom

BEST PIZZA
Zachary's

BEST SANDWICHES
Bakesale Betty

BEST SEAFOOD
Sea Salt

BEST SELECTION AT A BAR
Beer Revolution

BEST SOUTHERN SOUL FOOD
Souley Vegan

BEST SPORTS BAR
The Grand Oaks Sports Bar

BEST STEAKS
Café Rouge

BEST TACO TRUCK
Sinaloa

BEST TAKE-OUT FOOD
Gregoire

BEST LAOTIAN/ BURMESE FOOD
Burma Superstar

BEST VEGETARIAN/ VEGAN RESTAURANT
Souley Vegan

BEST VIETNAMESE/ CAMBODIAN RESTAURANT
Pho 84

Jack London brasserie's take on poutine classes it up a couple notches by taking a bowlful of thick-cut, perfectly crisp French fries, topping them with a generous pile of rich, salty, locally sourced oxtail and a dusting of diced onions and herbs, and surrounding the whole thing with a moat of melty boutique cheddar. If your mouth isn't watering yet, you're not paying attention.

BEST REMIXED COMFORT FOOD

Cinnaholic

2132 Oxford St., Berkeley. 510-647-8684, Cinnaholic-Berkeley.com

As a lifestyle, veganism is about as ascetic as it gets — but that doesn't necessarily mean someone who eschews animal products doesn't relish the occasional chance to eat a baked good that's the size of their face and contains as many calories as the forbidden Big Mac. Sadly, and despite the seeming ubiquity of veganism around here, those in search of a cruelty-free calorie bomb have few places to look. That is, until last summer, when animal rights activists (and hung-up pastry chefs) Shannon and Florian Radke opened Cinnaholic — an entire business mercifully devoted to providing the East

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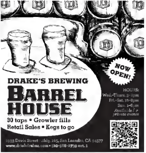

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choice of cheddar swiss provolone

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grilled stone fruit blue lake beans

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beer battered onion rings blue lake beans

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Best torta: Barbacoa torta ahogada at Pipirin.

Bay with insanely rich, unfathomably delicious cinnamon rolls, available in endless flavor combinations and all made without butter, eggs, or even commercial sugar, which is processed using animal bones. The Radkes offer forty plus different toppings and frostings in inspired flavors (Key Lime! Root beer! Candy canes! Vegan marshmallow!), but for the sake of your sanity, you're probably better off picking one of their pre-selected combos — something like the Fudge Brownie Chunk, which includes a gooey, glossy, unbelievably huge and impossibly well, buttery cinnamon roll covered in frosting and studded with rich vegan brownies. Tofu and bean sprouts, this isn't, and here's to equal-opportunity gluttony.

BEST TORTA

Barbacoa Torta Ahogada at Pipirin

Corner of 34th Ave. and Farnam St., Oakland

Weekends, this metal-clad taco wagon near busy St. Elizabeth Church in Fruitvale offers barbacoa: lamb cooked so long the meat falls away into savory, tender strands. You can have it heaped in tacos, order the thinned-out cooking juices as consome (with chickpeas, sprinkled with chopped cilantro and raw onion), but we love it best in a Guadalajara style *torta ahogada*: a wet sandwich. Get it spicy (*picoso*), and what emerges from the wagon's order window is a lamb-filled roll bathed in chile-spiked meat juices. You sit in one of Pipirin's plastic patio chairs under the backyard pavilion tent, your mouth burning, in a race to finish before the soaked bread turns soft as custard — this is a *torta* as much about the experience of eating it as it is about the sandwich itself. Don't forget to wash the lamb juices off at Pipirin's makeshift hand-washing station, a water jug with spigot, wedged in the taco wagon's hutch.

BEST TAKE ON EGGS BENEDICT

Huevos Benedictos at Aunt Mary's Cafe

4307 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-601-9227
AuntMarysCafe.com

Eggs Benedict are the burger and fries of brunch food. Almost every breakfast place has 'em, but they're rarely mind-blowing, and never

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garnered a well-deserved cult following by doing brunch food that's both mind-blowing and unexpected, has also unsurprisingly stepped up the Benedict game considerably over most other brunch spots. Only the basic skeleton and the eggs themselves are recognizable in Mary's Mexican-inflected take on the classic: Soggy bland English muffins are replaced by salty, substantial cheddar-corn cakes; typically gloppy hollandaise is swapped for a thick, russet brown, unbelievably spicy flood of *mole negro*; Canadian bacon is traded for crumbly Niman Ranch chorizo; and the whole thing's topped with generous scoops of cool guac and *pico de gallo*. The end result is spicy and savory and entirely removed from the standard Benedict. It's sadly only available during Aunt Mary's insanely popular weekend brunch, but it's well worth the wait.

BEST FROZEN DESSERT

Frozen Custard at Addie's Pizza Pie

3290 Adeline St., Berkeley 510-647-1100, AddiesPizzaPie.com

If you've ever tried to stay cool on a wilting August day in St. Louis or upstate New York, then you probably know frozen custard. Jennifer Millar does. When the owner of South Berkeley's Sweet Adeline Bakeshop was making plans to open nearby Addie's Pizza Pie last year, she sourced the special freezer needed to churn frozen custard — it freezes more slowly, and at a slightly higher temperature, than a standard ice cream maker does, yielding a frozen confection with an amazingly smooth texture that feels silken on the tongue. Millar uses a mixture of Clover milk and half-and-half enriched with organic cream from Straus Family Creamery in West Marin (locavore credentials you'd be hard pressed to find the equivalent of in St. Louis), in a simple range of classic flavors (vanilla, chocolate, strawberry) that don't distract from the extraordinary texture of what she's churning. And unlike the Midwest, where the summer heat index has the power to liquefy asphalt, here in mild-climate Berkeley you have the luxury of eating frozen custard slowly, without risk of melting before reaching the end of your scoop.

BEST JALISCO HOME COOKING

Taqueria Campos

3650 Foothill Blvd., Oakland 510-261-4260

Like most dynamic districts, Oakland's Fruitvale and San Antonio neighborhoods have personalities perennially in flux. Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Oaxacans — new waves of immigrants are constantly forcing the kind of recalibration that keeps East Oakland's taco zone an endless source of fascination for *carnitas* fanciers. Fortunately, a few places still hold to the Jalisco specialties that gave the area its original Latin soul. Prime among them: Taqueria Campos, Ana Maria Campos' very tiny, very personal restaurant sequestered behind a takeout window opening onto Foothill Boulevard. Over the years, we've been fans of Campos' holy trinity of Jalisco rancho specialties — *menudo blanco*, *pozole* and goat *birria* — and we're happy to say they're just as delicious, just as carefully made as ever. The *birria* here is the best we've tasted in Oakland, its broth stained carmine from chiles, and with the kind of deep flavor that comes from the slow simmering of meat and bones. Plus we're in love with the

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST AFRICAN RESTAURANT

Enssaro

I love that you can call ahead for gluten-free injera, b/c really, these days we all have some GF friend we have to take into consideration. — *Jimmyg*

BEST BAR

Albatross Pub

They have 6, yes 6 dartboards. You got a problem with six? — *lemoneinyman*

Beer Revolution

I adore the tall bartender with the ponytail, he always finds great beer to drink! — *skronek*

Heart and Dagger

Incredibly diverse and affordable without an attitude unless you bring one. — *Bigurneck*

Forbidden Island, Alameda

Tiki all the way, baby. — *kiluma*

Mar Saigon

Okay, so it's more a tasty restaurant than a bar, but where else can you get liquor poured from a barrel of dead cobras? — *Nicolas*

The bar at Boot and Shoe

Hortense and John are friggin' mixing magic in one of the most comfortable bars in the east bay! — *Pauricio*

BEST BARBECUE

Brown Sugar Kitchen

The best baby backs I've had in my life. The kicker is, everyone else I make try them says the same thing! — *Pauricio*

Phat Matt

Just like I had them in North Carolina! — *Leon*

BEST BREAKFAST/BRUNCH

Cock-a-Doodle café

The pulled pork omelette is one of the best things that has ever been in my mouth, and they have micheladas. Win. — *RedRage*

Emil Villa's, Hayward

Best eggs benedict anywhere. All their breakfasts are awesome, but the eggs benedict especially rocks — fresh cooked ham-steak from their smoker makes this ridiculously tasty. — *mhood*

Thai Temple

Because of their overflowing trash cans and, of course, the people-watching. — *Russell ED* *botanas* of warm *chicharrones* and semiliquid refried beans Campos sends to your table as you wait for lunch to arrive.

BEST BURGER

Sidebar

542 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-452-9500, Sidebar-Oakland.com

If there's one thing Barbara Mulas and Mark Drazek know, it's how to please a bar packed with locals on limited budgets. Sidebar's chef/owners provide over a dozen of simple, bright-tasting bistro dishes made with skill from good ingredients. Prime example: the Sidebar house burger. Unlike burgers that serve as excuses for piling on bacon, caramelized onions, and bacon jam, Sidebar's finds virtue in restraint: a simple, well seasoned and carefully cooked patty on a grilled bun brushed with chipotle-spiked Thousand Island. The excellent, thin-sliced cucumber and onion pickles are house-made, and you get a bonus stack of Sidebar's thick, skin-on oven-baked fries. Cost: $11.50 (75 cents more if you tack on cheese). Seated at the three-sided bar, a Manhattan made with Alameda-distilled St. George single-malt whiskey on one side of you, a burger on the other — together clocking in just slightly north of $20 — is our idea of a weeknight out.

BEST THIN-CRUST PIZZA

Emilia's Pizzeria

2995 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-704-1794, EmiliasPizzeria.com

At one time or other, ex-IT guy Keith Freilich has spun pies at Flour + Water in San Francisco, Pizzaiolo in Oakland, Grimaldi's in Hoboken, New Jersey — hell, even a Garden State Pizza Hut. When he opened his own tiny storefront pizza shop in South Berkeley nearly two years ago, Freilich focused on one thing — coal-oven-style New York thin-crust — and succeeded in doing it well. A plain, Neapolitan-style pizza from Emilia's has a medium-thin crust with an open, rustic crumb, some char, and a simple topping of fresh and aged mozzarella, basil leaves, and crushed plum tomatoes. You can pimp it with other stuff (Molinari sopressata, Calabrian chiles) to please more purists, but even basic, Freilich's pies have flavor, personality, and a consistent point of view. That personality extends to Emilia's ordering system, which on paper makes Freilich seem as rigidly rule-bound as the soup guy from *Seinfeld*, but don't worry. As long as you're good-natured about waiting up to two hours for your takeout phone-in pizza and remember to bring cash, he's a total sweetheart.

BEST FRIED CHICKEN

Hibiscus

1745 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, 510-444-2626, HibiscusOakland.com

Good chefs cook from personal history, making memory edible. When it comes to Sarah Kirnon of Hibiscus, either she's a better-than-average cook or her personal history is way more interesting than that of fellow chefs who grew up haunting Sbarros in suburban mega-malls. Contemplating an order of Kirnon's Miss Olive's fried chicken, it's clear that both are true.

Freshest cocktails: Farmers' market cocktails at Easy Lounge. Chris Duffey

Kirnon spent her childhood in Barbados (with holiday jaunts to Antigua and Trinidad), raised by her great-grandmother and grandmother — the Miss Olive for whom Hibiscus' fried chicken is named. The chef has adapted it for the farm-to-table era, brining the bird before poking a chopped mix of parsley, thyme, and cilantro into holes in the flesh. The breading ends up thick and crunchy, craggy and dark — it's among the deepest-colored fried chicken you'll find — over juicy meat infused with garlic, lime, and herbs. Accompaniments constantly change, but gravy is a constant, just like the charm of Kirnon's cooking.

BEST WEEKS-OLD COCKTAIL

Barrel-Aged Martini at Adesso

4395 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-601-0305, DopoAdesso.com

Barrel-aging cocktails — mixing up a batch of some spirit-forward drink like Manhattans or Negronis and leaving it to sit for five or six weeks in used wine or whiskey barrels — is a recent American notion. The United States Bartenders' Guild's Lou Bustamante says barrel-aging was starting to gain momentum, but few bars have the space to do it, especially since the idea hasn't really caught on with customers. Judging by the aged martini on Adesso's cocktail menu, that's a shame. If you're expecting the bracing jolt, the sharply etched lines of a freshly made martini, you'll be disappointed. The vermouth succumbs to oxidation in the barrel, turning the whole mixture a pale rose pink, and the drink's outlines become gentle, the way plums soften to prune. It's the perfect aperitivo for Adesso's beautiful platters of house prosciutto and salami from resident *salumi* maker Chad Arnold, and — like them — it's a reminder of what time and patience can do.

FRESHEST COCKTAILS

Farmer's Market Cocktails at Easy Lounge

3255 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland, 510-338-4811, Easy510.com, Every Saturday, 2 p.m.-2 a.m.

Fresh means new, fresh means hip, and, in the agricultural sense, fresh means just picked at the peak of taste and nutrition. Easy Lounge's farmers' market cocktails are all three. Sufficiently institutionalized after four years, the popular Saturday-afternoon event is now one of the bar's biggest draws. Every week, staff head over to the nearby Grand Lake Farmers' Market for fresh fruits and other produce to incorporate into inventive cocktails like the Heart of Stone, made of gin and Orgeat syrup with nectarine juice and lemon, and the No Knock, made of tequila with watermelon juice, Serrano pepper simple syrup, and lemon. Three or four new custom concoctions are offered every Saturday, with remarkably few repeats — even during the winter, when preserves sometimes stand in for whole fruit. Weekly DJs and bar snacks like kettle corn, also from the market, help keep the scene fresh.

BEST NONALCOHOLIC COCKTAIL

Tonic Spritzer at Pizzaiolo/Boot and Shoe Service

Pizzaiolo, 5008 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-652-4888, PizzaioloOakland.com; Boot and Shoe Service, 3308 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-763-2668, BootandShoeService.com

Upstarts have begun concocting their own tonic waters nearly five years ago, following the pioneering of Portland bartender Kevin Ludwig. Back in 2009, Pizzaiolo bar manager Cate Whalen began crafting her own version of the brownish, murky-looking mixer: a light syrup infused with citrus, South American chinchona bark she buys from Jennifer Collias's Small Hand Foods, and herbs, including wormwood flowers, the source of vermouth's characteristic bitterness. (In the past, Whalen has used botanicals harvested from Pizzaiolo's backyard herb garden in Temescal, but recent crackdowns were intended to stop the practice.) Both Pizzaiolo and its Boot and Shoe Service sibling offer a fine G&T made from Plymouth gin stirred up with Whalen's brew, but for teetotaling, nothing's better than the virgin variation, composed of tonic and fizzy water on the rocks. Without the distractions of gin you get a sharper view of Whalen's handiwork, a blend of appetite-inducing tannins and herbal complexity, set off by a framework of restrained sweetness. And given that it's all but identical to the boozy version, you can skip the alcohol without being forced to sip something with the sophistication index of a Shirley Temple.

BEST INDIAN

Vik's Chaat Corner

2390 Fourth St., Berkeley, 510-644-4432, VikChaatCorner.com

It was a little more than a year ago that Amod Chopra oversaw the relocation of Vik's, the Indian chaat shop his parents, Vinod and Indira Chopra, launched in their garage/like West Berkeley market warehouse back in 1989. The expanded restaurant might be no more than a few blocks away from the original Vik's Chaat House, but Vik's Chaat Corner feels like a new universe. Maybe the best part: Instead of going sleeker, fancier, or more fusion-y, the Chopras managed to keep the unpretentious, concrete-lined character of the original, important since the food coming out of the kitchen tries to stay faithful to the Indian street. Vik's *pani puri* — puffed crisps you fill with tamarind water

— are still the best in town. Izan's beefy roti (sort of like Chinese green onion pancakes filled with meat stew) are consistently well made, the chicken *biryani* puts other local versions to shame, and the *lassis* are worryingly tasty.

BEST ETHIOPIAN

Cafe Colucci

6427 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-601-7999, CafeColucci.com

If you're learning about a new cuisine at the same time you're discovering it, it's hard to discern the good from the merely okay. And while it's easy to find Ethiopian and Eritrean restaurants on the long stretch of Telegraph starting just south of the university and ending in Temescal, it's not always easy to find *gomen* and *shiro wat* with nuance. Enter Cafe Colucci, Fethawerk Tefferi's long-time fixture on the Berkeley-Oakland border, with a decor that makes you feel a bit like you're dining in a tent. The *kitfo* (minced raw beef spiked with Ethiopian chilies, cardamom, and spiced butter) shines just as hard as it always did, and the menu lists unusual items like *assa tibs* — whole fried fish with Ethiopian-style fried potatoes — even *doulet*, a dish of liver, beef, and lamb tripe. What's more, Cafe Colucci's *injera* — the ubiquitous, slightly fermented pancake-like bread — is made with a high proportion of *teff*, Ethiopia's nutty-tasting cereal grain.

BEST PLACE TO EAT SPAM

Mac's Wok

10558 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, 510-524-9288

Westerners get a kick out of the crazy mish-mash of East and West on the menu at Mac's Wok (formerly Ian's Asian Bistro, at a new location). The pork cutlets served over cheesy baked spaghetti à la Chef Boyardee, the noodle soup topped with sliced hot dogs, the seemingly-out-of-place sides of garlic bread and borscht. But for anyone who grew up in Hong Kong, the food at Mac's Wok is classic diner fare — comfort food in the purest sense. Perhaps the one ingredient that best embodies the wacky hybrid of cultures you'll find at this kind of Hong Kong-style "tea diner" is Spam, that most maligned of processed meats. At Mac's Wok, Spam is used in all kinds of dishes — in sandwiches, over rice — but the spam and egg noodle soup is an HK classic. It's a combination of flavors that's surprising and slightly trashy but — once you taste it — entirely logical.

BEST PLACE TO GET DIM SUM

East Ocean Seafood Restaurant

1713 Webster St., Alameda, 510-865-3381
EastOceanSeafoodRestaurant.com

We love Oakland's functional, distinctly non-touristy Chinatown as much as the next person, but it's no joke trying to deal with the parking and the long lines — to say nothing of getting trampled by aggressive *har gow* hunting grannies — during the weekend dim sum rush. Besides, the best dim sum in the area is in sleepy Alameda, at East Ocean Seafood Restaurant, where you'll find better-than-solid versions of all the classics: pork buns, steamed rice rolls, egg tarts and, of course, the aforementioned lovely translucent shrimp-filled dumplings known as *har gow*. There's fast turnover on the push carts, so everything's nice and fresh-tasting, and the cooks have a light touch with the sauces and the grease level. Best of all, there's plenty of easy street parking, and, even at eleven o'clock on a Sunday morning, there's rarely too long of a wait.

BEST NEW RESTAURANT

Plum

2214 Broadway, Oakland, 510-444-7586, PlumOakland.com

Yeah, there's been a certain amount of hype surrounding Daniel Patterson's casual Oakland outpost (now run by the über-talented chef Charlie Parker), and folks who go expecting gut-busting portion sizes are likely to be disappointed. But to be able to get this kind of precise, labor-intensive, beautiful food at these prices? It's literally a game-changer, making Plum the kind of place where two people can just as easily have a quick and satisfying $30 lunch as they can a $200 blow-out celebration dinner. Yes, it's true that tweezers are occasionally employed during the plating process, but to focus too much on that misses the point. From the lovely slow-cooked (sous-vide) eggs to the decadent burgers to any number of interesting multi-component vegetable preps, this is seriously delicious, wonderfully sophisticated food. And have you tried the weekend brunch? It might be the best in the Bay Area.

BEST DEEP DISH PIZZA

Little Star Pizza

1175 Solano Ave., Albany, 510-526-7827, LittleStarPizza.com

For years, those of us who happened to prefer our pizza with a little more, um, girth have had few choices beyond that certain other Chicago-style deep dish pizza place. But then Little Star opened up a branch in Albany, on an increasingly happening stretch of Solano Avenue, and for the past year has been putting out deep dish pies that blow the competition out of the water. The difference lies in the care that goes into every individual component: the zesty tomato sauce, the cheese, the toppings, and — best of all — the crunchy (never soggy) cornmeal crust. And if you're one of those East Coast purists who scoff at the very notion of a deep dish pizza, we dare you to try Little Star's "Classic" version (with sausage, mushrooms, onions, and green peppers) and see if you don't change your mind.

BEST KOREAN DIVE

Dan Sung Sa

2775 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-663-5927

How can you go wrong with a nickname like "Porno Palace"? While rumors that this *soju bang* (or Korean pub) used to house an adult video store are strictly apocryphal — the Korean name actually pays tribute to an old movie theater in Seoul — there is, in fact, an element of sketchiness to the place. The dim lighting, pri

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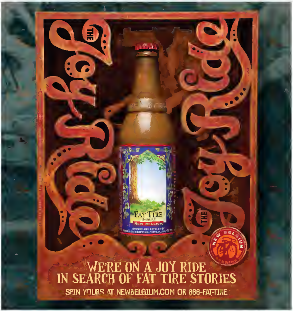
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vate booths, and (non-X-rated) Korean movie posters plastered all over the walls make it easy to pretend you've entered some seedy Asian underworld hangout. Most of the food at Dan Sung Sa is spicy, and all of it goes perfectly with a large mug of cold OB beer: the spicy rice cakes (order them "with everything"), the several variations of Korean-style fried chicken, and something called "corn cheese" (corn kernels cooked in sweet condensed milk) that's a lot more addictive than it sounds.

BEST BOBA DRINKS

Sweet Booth

388 9th St., Oakland, 510-893-3633

When they're done well, bubble teas and other "boba" drinks — with their characteristic chewy-sweet tapioca pearls, are the ideal summertime treat — a cold beverage, a dessert, and a meal, all in one. And who doesn't love the fat straws and the vacuum-sealed plastic lids? In the Bay Area, boba shops are a dime a dozen, but most are selling drinks chock-full of artificial ingredients and stale, almost plastic-y tapioca balls. At Sweet Booth, they use real tea and real fruit (fresh, when possible) and the boba is fresh and soft, with just the right toothsome quality — in Taiwan, they call this texture "QQ." A particular standout is the Pearl Taro drink, which is essentially a milkshake: a generous portion of fresh taro blended with a scoop of vanilla ice cream and a little bit of ice. Factor in those good tapioca pearls, and this is one drink you won't mind ordering over and over and over again.

BEST SUBSTANTIVE FOOD AT A COFFEE SHOP

Kefa Coffee

422 29th Ave., Oakland, 510-261-3400, KefaCoffee.com

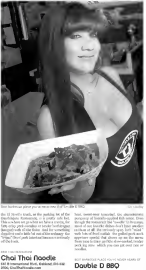
The East Bay is now nearing an embarrassment of riches in terms of good coffee shops and there's no shortage of places that'll serve you a decent scone or muffin. But good luck if you want something *savory* and *filling* that isn't a quiche or $8 worth of name-brand lettuce served on name-brand bread. None of the food served at Kefa Coffee is your typical "artisanal" fare, but you'd be hard-pressed to find a better breakfast sandwich in town — the bacon, scrambled egg, and cheese on croissant is divine. Better yet, order the egg salad sandwich, which is a revelation. Topped with crunchy lettuce and crisp bacon, the egg salad itself moist and yolky, with little bits of green olive, encased in the roll nicely toasted. All of Kefa's sandwiches are lovingly made to order, and the house coffee is strong and good and even comes with a free refill.

BEST TACO TRUCK

El Novillo Taco Truck

1001 Fruitvale Blvd., Oakland, 510-533-7294, ElAgavero.com/TACOTRUCK.html

One of the great things about the Fruitvale taco truck scene is that the trucks are all fairly idiosyncratic — one place might make the best carne asada tacos, another might serve up killer *al pastor*, yet another might be your go-to place for tortas or breakfast burritos or *aguas frescas*. You can easily spend an afternoon going from truck to truck, hitting each one's highlights, and never have to eat the same thing twice. But if what you're craving for your taco is tasty meat, the El Novillo truck, in the parking lot of the Guadalajara Restaurant, is a pretty safe bet. This is where we go when we have a craving for fatty-crisp pork *carnitas* or tender beef *lengua* (tongue) with all the fixins. And for something decadent and a little bit out of the ordinary, the "tripas" (fried pork intestine) tacos are seriously off the hook.



Best barbecue place you've never heard of: Double D BBQ

Chris Duffey

BEST THAI RESTAURANT

Chai Thai Noodle

545 E International Blvd., Oakland, 510-832-2500, ChaiThaiNoodle.com

Maybe your idea of Thai cuisine has been limited to greasy takeout versions of *pad thai* and pineapple fried rice. Or maybe you've been eating many Berkeleyfied Thai food with all-organic ingredients but surprisingly little heat — or much flavor at all, to put it bluntly. If so, you really ought to give Chai Thai Noodle a try. This is real-deal, authentic stuff — nothing else in the East Bay comes close. At Chai Thai, the flavors are *bold*: Thai chilis that pack serious heat, sweet-sour tamarind, the characteristic pungency of liberally-applied fish sauce. Even though the restaurant has "noodle" in its name, most of our favorite dishes don't have noodles in them at all: the seriously spicy *larb* "salad" with bits of fried catfish, the grilled pork neck appetizer special that shows up on the menu from time to time, and the slow-cooked, tender pork leg stew, which you can get over rice or noodles.

BEST BARBECUE PLACE YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

Double D BBQ

1240 1st Ave., Oakland, 510-228-7660, DoubleDBBQ.net

Yes, they're only open three days a week and never during dinner hours, but God bless you if you're lucky enough to get a hold of some of the slow-cooked, crusty, smoky brisket they're dishing up at Oakland's Double D BBQ. The house-made barbecue sauce (a tangy-sweet tomato-based version) is tasty if lacking in heat, and the side dishes are passable — but the star here is the meat itself, especially that brisket. Incredibly tender and lush, with nice burnt edges and just the right amount of fat. And did we mention smoky? Your fingers and your clothes will smell of it for hours. Bring a hearty appetite or maybe a couple of friends. All of the meats are sold by weight, and the smallest amount they'll sell you is a half a pound.

BEST AFFORDABLE ALTERNATIVE TO HIGH-END ARTISAN ICE CREAM OR SORBET

Flavor Brigade

3540 Fruitvale Ave., Oakland, 510-479-1672, FlavorBrigade.com

Listen: We love Scream Sorbet as much as the next person, but there's a cost associated with that kind of artisanal Pacojet-powered frozen confection. For those of us ballin' on a budget, the Philadelphia-style Italian ices ("water ices," as they're called in Philly) and frozen custards at Flavor Brigade in the Dimond district scratch the same itch. With a lot less fanfare than many of his more upscale competitors, owner Brendan Galloway also makes his ices from scratch, using real fruit. And when he tells you there isn't a more refreshing treat to be had on a hot summer day, he isn't kidding around. Meanwhile, fans of soft-serve ice cream should exercise caution before trying Flavor Brigade's delicious frozen custard — the stuff is seriously habit-forming. Best of all, the shop is generous with samples, there's always a $0.99 flavor of the day, and the portions, even for a "small" order, are gigantic by food standards.

BEST UPDATED EAST COAST COMFORT FOOD

Scolari's Good Eats

1303 Park St., Alameda, 510-521-2480

Food nostalgia's a bitch, especially if you're dealing with transplanted East Coasters, folks with Italian American grandmothers, or the aged — people who love complaining about how the versions of their childhood favorites widely available in the Bay Area just aren't the same. So it's no small feat that Scolari's Good Eats serves up Italian-inflected East Coast comfort food with an unmistakable ring of authenticity — but still elevates the cuisine to new heights, through careful preparation and the use of high quality ingredients. It's true of their *strombolis* (like grown-up pizza pockets) and their burgers. It's true of their killer Taylor ham, egg, and cheese sandwich, served on an airy brioche bun. The place is more takeout joint than sit-down restaurant, with just a handful of cramped counter seats available. But regulars know to have their orders brought over to the bar next door, Lucky 13, where you can enjoy a spectacular selection of beers on tap with your meal.

BEST LOCALLY MADE SAUSAGE

Smoked Pork Sausage at La Bedaine

1585 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-559-8201, LaBedaine.com

These days, a new school of artisan butchers and sausage makers — of tattooed and mostly twentysomething "meatsters" — are the rock stars of the culinary world. But even as folks like 4505 Meats' Ryan Farr experiment with new techniques, some of the best things are those that simply stay true to their Old World roots. Take the smoked pork sausages sold at Berkeley's La Redame ($4 for a two-pack), Chef Alain Delangle prepares his sausages "Montbéliard style," in the manner traditional to the Franche-Comté region in eastern France. He cures them for a day then smokes them for eight hours over hickory sawdust. The result is the smokiest and perhaps the best tasting sausage we've ever had — and one of the most versatile too. Delangle recommends barbecuing the sausages on a hot grill, poaching them to serve with potato salad, or slicing them raw and pan-searing the pieces to have for breakfast with a plate of eggs.

BEST RESTAURANT HAPPY HOUR

Marica Restaurant

5301 College Ave., Oakland, 510-985-8388, MaricaFood.wordpress.com

Lots of restaurants offer happy hour specials but Rockridge's Marica is one of the only places we know of with an endless happy hour: All night, every night, you can have your fill of cheap cocktails, dollar oysters, and $5 appetizers. Marica is a seafood restaurant that's sort of French-bistro-meets-a healthy sprinkling of Asian fusion — the kind of place that would have been trendy in the early-2000s. But who cares about trendiness when the food is as good as Marica's, and the service as warm? Endless happy hour means there's no excuse not to get an order of piping hot Prince Edward Island mussels, served in a decadent Pernod-shallot broth. For good measure, even if it isn't listed on the menu, ask for a side of super-crisp *pommes frites* to help soak up all that lemony, buttery broth. The restaurant also has a great $26 three-course prix fixe ($22 before 6:30) and offers a 10-percent discount for cash payments.

BEST RICE BOWL

Korean Rice Bowl at Bowl'd

1479 Solano Ave., Albany, 510-526-6223, BowldSolano.com

Gussied up street food is all the rage these days, and one offshoot of this trend is a renewed interest in that humblest staple of Asian holes-in-the-wall: the rice bowl. Korean cuisine's signature rice bowl is the *bibimbap*: basically a bowl of rice topped with sauteed vegetables, a fried egg, chili pepper paste, and, often, some kind of sliced meat. In the East Bay, Albany's newly opened Bowl'd is executing variations on this classic at such a high level, no one else is even close. The flavors are brighter, the vegetables taste fresher and are cooked to perfection. Here, customization is the name of the game: You pick the kind of rice you want, the type of protein (thin-sliced beef, spicy pork, short ribs, etc.), and so forth. We recommend the "Sizzling Rock" *bibimbap*, which comes in a hot stone bowl and leaves you with wonderfully crispy bits at the bottom of the bowl, especially if you opt for white rice.

BEST PORK SANDWICH

Pulled Pork at Cafe Gabriela

988 Broadway, Oakland, 510-763-2233

Pork is the best. Saturated fat content and various religious prohibitions aside, this fact is indisputable. Pork. Is. The. Best. Especially when it's done like it is at Cafe Gabriela, a sweet little lunch spot near 12th Street BART: marinated in adobo sauce, piled thick and moist on toasted Bread Workshop baguette, and covered with sweet caramelized onions, prepared by a polite and fabulous sandwich maestro in a clean, compact, sun-lit cafe. The meat itself is clearly the star of the show here, and it's damn near perfect: tender and not too chewy, not greasy in the slightest, and neither so copious you'll need to take a nap afterwards nor so insubstantial you'll be hungry again by four. If you're lucky, the bottom layer of bread'll soak through with the adobo sauce, making for a salty-sweet-spicy-bready riot of awesomeness. That is, if you can wait long enough.

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST BURGERS

900 Grayson
Mmmmmmmmmmmmmm — *melanie_kotake*

In & Out
But ask for animal style — *dhsosas*

Hulk Wag
Homemade-seeming veggieburger — not that Gardenburger or Bocaburger nonsense! — *Molina, Jennifer*

Luka's Tap Room
Don't even get me started on the Belgian Fries. — *Squalorpixie*

Sam's Superburger
Double bacon cheeseburger — nuff said. — *sdood*

Saturn Café
Sorry, I'm a vegetarian. — *speak_nina*

Scolari's Good Eats (1303 Park St.)
EVER — *gwendolina*

BEST CHINESE RESTAURANT

Shan Dong
Sesame handcut noodles! — *Molina, Jennifer*

Shen Hua
Period end of report — *jdigao*

BEST CAFE

Farley's
When they are open — *Spongebrunda*

Mama Buzz
Buzzzzbuzz — *Gollie_Wog*

Zocalo, San Leandro, CA
Great locally owned, roast-their-own-coffee shop. Always a cute chick at the counter, always. Tasty coffee. Free wifi too. I <3 Zocalo. — *sdood*

BEST REMIXED BURRITO

Seoul on Wheels' Korrito

Various East Bay locations, follow on Twitter @seoulonwheels for exact location, 415-336-

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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST COCKTAILS

Luka's Tap Room
The East Bay Iced Tea should be the official drink of the East Bay. — *Disco Von Doom*

BEST COFFEE

4 Barrel
Sorry Blue Bottle — *Spicypoboyrule*

Blue Bottle
Obv — abradr

Cole Coffee
If you like the kind of coffee that puts hair on your chest and is missing that burnt been-sitting-here-for-hours taste, then look no more. No matter if you buy the beans or come in for a cup, Cole consistently has the best coffee in town. This is not the weak stuff in which you can see the bottom of your cup. This is colon-cleansing brew that tastes delicious! — *honeyhawlove*

Gaylord's
You get animal designs in your latte — *natalieclord*

BEST DELI

Genova Delicatessen
My Grandpa's favorite since he was a kid! — *rynations*

Sierra Market
No frills, just a solid delicious sammich. — *RedRage*

BEST DESSERTS

Breakfast bun from Hopkins Street Bakery
Get it fresh, or put it in the toaster oven for 20 seconds. Delicious. — *makoto_kitoko*

Ace
Funnel Cake fries FTW — *spook_mne*

0987 SeoulOnWheels.com

When a food truck parked on a nondescript Emeryville block on a random Tuesday afternoon has a line extending down the sidewalk twenty feet, you have to suspect something's up. And when you have to wait fifteen minutes to order a pre-made foil wrapped burrito, that better be one heck of a burrito. Well, it is and it isn't — it's warm and delicious and wonderful, but it's not exactly a burrito. It's Seoul on Wheels burrito — a Korean burrito featuring spicy rice, kimchi, cheese, cilantro, sour cream and your choice of filling: chicken, spicy pork, tofu, or *bulgogi* (Korean rib-eye beef). The taste is like nothing you've ever had before: sweet, saucy, spicy, tangy, cheesy, gooey. For the complete Korean burrito, go with the *bulgogi*: its soft, lightly crunchy texture stands out ever so subtly from its surroundings, and its traditional barbecued flavor feels right at home in a tortilla. The result is a new height in cross-cultural comfort food.

BEST MORNING BUZZ

Cafe Biere

3986 Adeline St. Emeryville, CafeBiere.com

For the true night owl, the emerging cracks of sunlight on the eastern horizon are about as welcome as the hangover that follows that long, hard night of boozing or partying. But the party does not have to end when that pesky sun comes to ruin what was, hopefully, a wonderful evening of play. Just drag yourself out of bed and on over to Cafe Biere for its weekend brunch, where Nineties hip-hop bumps loudly before noon and the booze flows like the Russian River after a thick winter snow melt. For a mere $13 (hang with me), Cafe Biere delivers "bottomless mimosas" made with an array of fresh fruits — flavors that include aloe, guava, strawberry, and, of course, orange. And while you're shaking your booty to Tupac's "California Love" and drinking your fifth mimosa, satisfy your appetite with a tasty omelet or scramble served with thick, seasoned roasted potatoes and a fresh salad for about $10. Just remember: You have to sleep sometime.

BEST SOUL FOOD MASHUP

Souley Vegan

301 Broadway, Oakland, 510-922-1615, SouleyVegan.com

Even health food nuts need to get their grease on once in a while, and vegans are no exception. That's what makes Souley Vegan such an epic fusion of two extremes that feed on many of our dietary desires: the soulful bliss of high-salt greasy foods and the vegan vigilance of a veggie and grain-oriented diet. Whether you're an omnivorous eater putting back brews at Beer Revolution next door or a vegan acolyte craving a junk food fix, Souley Vegan delivers. The mac 'n' (not) cheese is so perfect a substitute to its dairy-based kin that it leaves the eater convinced it's the real thing. And the bite-size fried okra is like greasy popcorn at the movies. However, the best deals come for those who bring a group — and the finger-food nature of the dishes here is well suited for that — as $19 offers a thorough exploration of the menu that feeds at least four.

BEST SUSHI ON A BUDGET

Geta Japanese Restaurant

165 41st St. Oakland 510-653-4643

As amazing as this may sound, there is inexpensive food on Piedmont Avenue. It's not only inexpensive, it's sushi. Geta Japanese Restaurant isn't a place to go if you want a fancy sushi experience, but if you don't mind waiting in line to grab one of the few tables or stools cramped into the small restaurant, the rewards are well worth the wait and the sacrifice of space. Geta offers around ten different sushi rolls for $5 or under, like a California Roll with imitation crab and avocado or Spicy Avocado Tuna roll for $4.50. And the sushi is surprisingly good for the price. Geta is also geared for to-go orders

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(probably because of its size) so it is inexpensive, quick, and portable. You really can't beat this place if you want to satisfy that sushi fix on a budget (depending on how much you want to grub down) and from the comfort of your couch while watching an A's game.

BEST GAMES AND ACTIVITIES AT A BAR

Albatross Pub

1822 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-843-2473, AlbatrossPub.com

There are few places available these days for an adult to get down with his gamer roots. Kids have gargantuan entertainment facilities like Chuck E. Cheese's. But what about us? Where can an adult go, play some games, and enjoy a drink at the same time? Albatross. This Berkeley jewel was built with the gamer in mind. Never mind the six dart boards in the back (it's a rarity to find even one in a bar); this place boasts tables etched with a chess board for the intellectually driven, piles of board games including Apples to Apples, Checkers, and Connect Four, and there is, of course, a pool table in the back. The ambiance is dark and aged, which often draws a less-rowdy young to middle-age adult crowd. A full bar of tasty local micro-brewed beer awaits the eager patron to help lubricate the brain before an intense game of Scrabble or trivia pub quiz (every Sunday night). And the fireplace in the back, always burning through out those cold nights, is the perfect backdrop to checkmate your buddy.

BEST AFGHAN RESTAURANT

De Afghanan Kabob House

1190 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-549-3781

In a city often dominated by numerous Indian and Pakistani restaurants, it's surprising but also welcoming to find an Afghan establishment. Close to Pakistani in style and menu options, De Afghanan Kabob offers many vegetarian options with eggplant and pumpkin, the pumpkin dishes, specifically the *kadoo challow* have a fresh and not-too-spicy flavor that leaves you satisfied. As with its sister cuisines from the region, naan is a staple served at the restaurant, but there are also kebabs that leave your mouth watering, the chicken option is juicy, tender, and delicious. With reasonable prices (most entrées run $7.99 to $13), a relaxed ambiance (no alcohol is served), soothing music playing in the background, and a kind and helpful staff, De Afghanan Kabob House is a great place for a date.

BEST SOUL FOOD/SOUL FOOD

Uncle Wiley's Original BBQ

614 14th St., Oakland, 510-465-9200, UncleWileysBarBQ.com

Soul food should be simple, decadent, and reasonably priced. The salty, butter-soaked grub should send your body into an overgorged, heart racing rage by the meal's end, with pores dilated from the salt rush of the meal. It's not exactly healthy, but you don't eat it to trim down the waist; you eat soul food because it's the mother of all comfort foods. Enter Uncle Wiley's Original BBQ, a dive joint with some of the most delicious barbecue chicken and beef

Best sandwich cookie: Oreo at Homeroom.

Chris Duffey

brisket in the East Bay, delivering the soul essentials for a reasonable downtown Oakland price. Although it serves up sliced bread plastic-wrapped, the thick and delicious chunks of the saucy barbecued meat, the mouth-watering collard greens, and thick and creamy potato salad bring about memories of Louisiana cooking. The portions are large, too; a $12 dinner will be quite fine for either one cavernous eater or two nibblers. And if you're really ambitious, grab some of the deep-fried catfish while you're at it.

BEST GARLIC FRIES

Fivetenburger

Stops in Oakland, Berkeley, Emeryville, Fivetenburger.com, Twitter.com/fivetenburger

When James Beard published a recipe for Chicken with 40 Cloves of Garlic in the mid-1970s, America's obsession with the pungent bulb had not begun. Even now, forty cloves are unheard of — unless you're talking about garlic fries. For some reason, the ballpark staple demands that a patron's pores reek of garlic for a week after the last patch. Roland Robles, chef of the food truck Fivetenburger, understands that garlic is an ingredient, not *the* ingredient. He tosses his shoestring fries in garlic oil, foregoing minced garlic so the aroma of the oil is the driving force behind the slightly bitter tang delivered in each bite. The thin potato strips ensure that the fries come out crispy and not too dense, so the oil doesn't saturate or overpower the potato. Irresistible, the garlic fries even give Robles' amazing artisan burgers, which he expertly dares to cook rare and top with bacon and a fried egg, a whiff of jealousy.

BEST SANDWICH COOKIE

Oreo at Homeroom

400 40th St., Oakland, 510-597-0400, Homeroom510.com

Even before she opened Oakland mac n' cheese restaurant Homeroom with Erin Wade at the beginning of 2011, Allison Arevalo had a thing for rehabbing mass-market comfort foods. On her Local Lemons blog, the Brooklyn-to-Berkeley transplant did a series called Fast Food Slow, reimagining things like stuffed-crust pizza and chicken nuggets — even the Big Mac — as real foods made with quality local ingredients. The same spirit animates Homeroom's oreo, a pair of dark chocolate wafers stuffed with a credible simulacrum of that famous crème filling. In what may be a sly comment on the hypertension-striking sodium content in processed foods, Wade and Arevalo top their confection with a sprinkling of coarse sea salt. Then again, maybe the salt just helps make the oreo taste like an Oreo. Whatever the reason, Homeroom's owners have our respect, and not just because they know how to put together a delicious cookie. Considering they had to abandon "Little Mac" — Homeroom's original name — after lawyers for McDonald's turned up the heat, naming the oreo after the Kraft Foods favorite (even with that lowercase O) was a bold move.

BEST of THE EAST BAY
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BEST PUMPKIN CURRY

Hao Sarn Thai Cuisine

130 Washington Ave., Point Richmond, 510-233-8686

Let's be honest. Curry is such a dominant ingredient that too often curry dishes can all taste the same. "Green curry with ..." "Red curry ..." After those words, it often doesn't matter. So it's incredibly refreshing that a curry dish brings something to the plate that makes you stop and pay attention. Nestled in Point Richmond (an East Bay gem of its own), Hao Sarn Thai is unassuming and it's hard to find something on the menu that disappoints. However, its pumpkin curry is enough to carry the menu on its own. A mild curry with a little spice pairs with large chunks of pumpkin that fall apart in your mouth like unstable mashed potatoes. The bits of pumpkin are only slightly sweet so they give a nice contrast to the heat without causing too much confusion. When poured over jasmine rice, the soft pumpkin also serves as a unique texture against chewy rice, crunchy vegetables, and a tough protein. Ideal as an autumn treat, the dish is always a welcome change from the common curry.

BEST WHISKEY SOUR

Bar Three Fifty-Five

355 19th St., Oakland, 510-451-3355

The Irish called whiskey *Usque beatha*, which translates to the water of life. Essentially, perfection. Using that logic, if you're going to mess with perfection there had better be a damn good reason. When Bar Three Fifty-Five pours a whiskey sour, it improves on perfection by paying attention to detail. Made in house, its sour mix is anything but the Kool-Aid overkill that sells at supermarkets for $5 a gallon. It has a slightly higher viscosity than the whiskey and it's truly sour, giving a nice punch to the drink. Dilited with a little soda water, it doesn't overpower even the gentlest of whiskeys. A nice finishing flourish, the house-made brandied cherries again bypass the saccharin flavor and instead bring a small touch of sweetness that soaks up the sour and whiskey to turn it into a maroon ball of post-drink heaven. Even its ice is perfectly nice and square. Bar Three Fifty Five's handling of this classic cocktail turns even a well whiskey into an extraordinary one.

BEST SPECIALTY SPORTS BAR

Up & Under

2 West Richmond Ave., Point Richmond, 510-778-1313, TheUpandUnder.com

Most sports bars concentrate on the holy trinity of football, basketball, and baseball (with a little soccer and hockey thrown in), but the Up & Under is dedicated first, last, and always to the great American sport of ... rugby? Rugby jerseys, rugby paintings, rugby posters and all manner of rugby paraphernalia cover every square inch of wall space. Back issues of *Rugby* and *Rugby World* are available for perusal. The flat-screen above the bar is tuned to the Rugby Channel more or less exclusively; even the light fixtures are crafted from re-sewn rugby balls. Owner/rugby player Nathen Travers has channeled his enthusiasm for the sport into a friendly, laid-back hangout with well-crafted cocktails, good food (try the filet mignon sliders), and a diverse crowd of hipsters, families, kids, and grownups. "North America's first and only rugby pub" is a fine sipping option even if you don't know the difference between a winger, a flanker, a scrum, and a hooker.

BEST ROOT BEER FLOAT

Hudson

5356 College Ave., Oakland, 510-595-4000, HudsonOakland.com

Prepared properly, the root beer float is the perfect combination of dessert and elixir: a seemingly simple mashup of ice cream and brewed sarsaparilla that manages to be sweet, snarky, cool, creamy, earthy, and effervescent all at the same time. Hudson, John Hurley's stark, snazzy temple to New American cook-ery, prepares a root beer float that respects the concoction's classic symmetry while adding touches of elegance and showbiz. It's served

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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST FOOD AT A BAR

BBQ at Missouri Lounge
Great prices, and just what you want. Have a can of beer while you wait — *Bluemindedpeople*

Disco Volante
Bacon jam, OMG! — *Conan Neutron*

Zuni Café
Perfectly priced tasty appetizers that don't bog you down or kill your buzz — *[illegible]*

BEST GAMES/ACTIVITIES AT A BAR

Albatross
Darts, pinball, board games, pub quiz... — *[illegible]*

BEST GLUTEN-FREE PRODUCTS

Anything at Bohemian Bakery
They're gluten-free and vegan and giant and AMAZING! — *Russell EB*

BEST HEALTHY FAST FOOD

Amanda's
Bring it back! — *AH*

Nabe Way
Thank you, Gary Rhine — *Cat's Meow*

Nature's Express
Anyone else still using the 2-for-1 coupons they put out months ago? — *Russell EB*

BEST ICE CREAM

Fentons
Seriously, is there any other place? — *Bow wow*

Nature's Express
The only Vegan Soft Serv within 1000 miles! — *family*

parfait style in a tall glass with alternating layers of vanilla ice cream and an icy granita made from Ahn's exemplary sugarcane root beer, a pitcher of (non-frozen) Ahn's presented alongside for personalized pouring. The crunch of the granita and the almost peppery bite of the root beer are cushioned by the lush pillowy ice cream; a plate of warm-from-the-oven chocolate chip cookies gilds the lily nicely.

BEST SANDWICHES

Southie

6311 College Ave., Oakland, 510-654-0100, SouthieOakland.com

At Southie, a classy little hangout/takeout joint from the folks at Wood Tavern, the humble sandwich enters a whole new realm of complexity and delectability. Chef Maryann Jones' ever-changing seasonal menu might feature marinated beets, shaved fennel, puckery chèvre, and toasted almonds on a French roll; lush Niman Ranch pulled pork with garlicky aioli and pickled cucumber on Acme sourdough; sweet, succulent Dungeness crabmeat on a buttered bun with bits of lemon and celery; tasty pork-and-beef meatballs draped in provolone and stuffed into a La Farine baguette. Each is a striking, beautifully balanced minor artwork, and a few equally imaginative open-faced sandwiches (aka crostini) are available as appetizers. (A soup of the day and a couple of intricately tossed salads are on the menu as well.) Service is fast and friendly, there are two classy beers and three snazzy wines on tap, and the carrot cake whoopie pie is even better than the sandwiches.

BEST AL FRESCO BOOZING

Lake Chalet

1520 Lakeside Dr., Oakland, 510-208-LAKE, TheLakeChalet.com

Liquor tastes even better when the weather's balmy and the great outdoors beckon you to sip your pinot grigio, hefeweizen, or martini by sunshine or starlight instead of in some dim, airless saloon. But where? Someplace apart from the angst and din of the city but close enough for convenience, preferably on the water's edge with lovely vistas and an away-from-it-all atmosphere, yet urbane enough to offer more than just PBR and Chablis. The Lake Chalet has it all. Situated along a quiet stretch of Lake Merritt, this beautifully restored century-old former boathouse feels light years away from Uptown and downtown alike. The bar offers several specialty microbrews, two dozen wines by the glass, and an imaginative array of artisan cocktails. And the views of the lake, the lights, the sailboats, and the moonrise are as intoxicating as the booze. The outdoor deck also has its own bar, grill, and jetty complete with an honest-to-God Venetian gondolier.

BEST STAYCATION

The Doña Colada Cocktail in Doña Tomás' Courtyard

5004 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-450-0522, DonaTomas.com

The staycation, the recession's answer to the grand tours of yore, is easier to accomplish here in the Bay Area than just about anywhere. Yearning for the glories of the Swiss Alps? Check out Mt. Diablo. In the mood for the moors of Yorkshire? The Marin Headlands are thirty minutes away. And when you're jonesing for a trip to the tropics, head to 51st and Telegraph for Doña Tomás' positively Puerto Vallarta-ish patio. Situated behind the restaurant proper and enclosed by exposed brick, low-relief walls, and rambling ivy, it's an immediate tropical getaway reminiscent of a French Quarter courtyard or a West Indies cloister. Colorful mosaics and a burbling fountain add to the warm, languid atmosphere, but what really seals the deal is the Doña Colada, the bar's finest concoction. Lime juice, coconut milk, and Flor de Caña white rum are blended into a sweet, creamy frappe that evokes Martinique and Fiji and all of those other places you'll be able to afford to visit next year.

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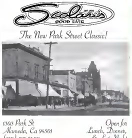
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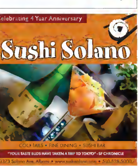
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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST JAPANESE/SUSHI RESTAURANT

Genghis in Castro Valley
A total hidden gem.. don't tell anyone. — [illegible]

Yume
No fancy gringo rolls here — just raw fish excellence. — Molina, Jennifer

BEST JUKEBOX AT A BAR

Heart & Dagger
Owns. Owns owns owns. — [illegible]

BEST MOBILE FOOD CART/TRUCK

Tacos Ornelas up in Richmond
Goddamn good tacos for $1 — [illegible]

Tacos Mi Rancho
An al pastor burrito to rule all others! — [illegible]

BEST PIZZA

Domino's
Pacific Veggie rocks — [illegible]

Emilia's
In the top ten pizzas in the U.S.!!!! SO GOOD — Bill Bartell

Gioia Berkeley
However you spell it — [illegible]

Lanesplitter
Best first, last and always — [illegible]

Lo Coco's On Piedmont Ave
Tiny bit of Italian heaven. — bells & whistles

Zachary's
The deep dish is to KILL for — huffing duster

BEST SANDWICHES

Cam Huong
If you didn't get your sandwich here, for three bux, then you got the wrong thing. Trust me. — spook_nine

BEST RETRO KARAOKE BAR

The Alley

3325 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-444-8505

Before the karaoke machine there was the piano bar: a laid-back, convivial hangout with an enormous Steinway around which the lonely or the restive or the celebratory could gather up, listen to the noodlings of the artist in-residence, and, when the mood struck, croon along. There were no tinny synthesizers or oblique video accompaniments and very few showboaters to deal with, just a crew of wannabe Sinatras passing the mic, sharing the velvet hour, and rallying under the banner of Porter, Berlin, and the brothers Gershwin. Against all odds, the warmth and immediacy of the piano bar endures in this detached and plugged-in era, at least in Oakland, where Rod Dibble presides at The Alley's community spinet, just as he has for more than half a century. Pull up a stool, rifle through one of the songbooks, pick a tune in your general vocal range, and wait for your turn at the mic. Dibble has some 4,000 songs in his repertoire, and he's adept not only at guiding the inexperienced past a variety of vocal landmines; he's a marvelous accompanist and an encouraging audience to boot.

BEST REVOLUTIONARY REBIRTH

1944 Mai Tai at Trader Vic's

**9 Anchor Dr., Emeryville, 510-653-3400
TraderVics.com**

For decades, Trader Vic's rode on its vanished reputation as the Bay Area's premier hotspot, a place where one could enjoy fabulous tropical cocktails and exotica like sweet-and-sour spareribs in a setting that managed to be goofy-looking and elegant at the same time. Times changed, our taste buds outgrew the Trader's once-enticing delectations of authentic island cuisine, and just over a year ago the chain's Emeryville flagship closed for several months of renovation and reinterpretation. Today the place is less stuffy and more fun, with plenty of that old special-occasion allure still intact. But the best thing about the new Vic's is something that's nearly seventy years old: the original mai tai, invented by the Trader himself at the inaugural San Pablo Avenue location back in 1944. For years the bar had been serving a lighter version of the classic cocktail in deference to the cosmo-and-lemon-drop crowd, but the vogue for vintage libations has inspired a revival of the number-one recipe. Curaçao, almond syrup, lime juice, shaved ice, fresh mint, and a healthy slug of rich dark Jamaican rum come together in a sweet, potent wallop of a cocktail.

BEST ASIAN CUISINE

Green Papaya Deli

207 International Blvd., Oakland, 510-836-5337

The thing that sets Laotian cooking apart from the cuisines of its neighbors Vietnam, China, and Thailand is the crisp, distinct, bright, bitter-sour-spicy flavors of its greens, herbs, and proteins, delectably unadulterated by the sauces and sweeteners so otherwise prevalent in Southeast Asia. Our favorite place to sample this absolutely unique cuisine is Green Papaya Deli, an unprepossessing family-run storefront where authentic home-style Laotian dishes are the star attraction. Try the *larb* (the country's national dish), a hearty, spicy salad of marinated minced duck, galangal, mint, and lemongrass; *mok pa*, a hand-smacking platter of pungent steamed catfish wrapped in a banana leaf; the multifaceted yet beautifully balanced shrimp-squid-papaya-peanut-cucumber-cabbage salad; or a richly flavored bowl of chicken-coconut soup edged with bitter lime, scallions, and chili peppers. Despite its name, Green Papaya Deli is really a restaurant (although everything's available to go), so you can savor these dishes sitting down.

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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST SELECTION AT A BAR

Bar 355

I wanted an aviation and they were one of the few places that actually had creme de cassis and KNEW how to make it. — [illegible]

BEST SOUTHERN/SOUL FOOD

Angeline's

Fried chicken. Shrimp po' boys! Yes! — [illegible]

Jodie's

I kinda hope Jodie's doesn't win ever, then it will be even harder to get the fried chicken — [illegible]

Souley Vegan

And I'm not even vegan! — [illegible]

BEST THAI/LAO/BURMESE RESTAURANT

Burma Superstar

Oh ah ah ah tea leaf salad, baby! — *family*

BEST VEGETARIAN/ VEGAN RESTAURANT

Encuentro

Sit at the bar. Gorgeous menu. Scintillating design. A meal I remember even a year later...Have a hot date from heaven. mmmmmmm... — *family*

Saturn Café

This was hard, but Saturn is the most utilitarian. Plus, they don't make you pay $14 for a plate of kale and lentils. — *spook_[illegible]*

BEST PALATE CLEANSER

Seasonal Sorbet at Zut!

1820 Fourth St., Berkeley 510-644-0444, ZutonFourth.com

After a long, rich and (perhaps over-) satisfying meal all you want to do is kick back, digest, and rid your taste buds of all those accumulated flavors. Rabelais thought crisp greens worked best for "scouring the maw"; others opt for candied ginger, hot tea, parsley sprigs, a tart apple, or a snifter of Calvados. Our favorite palate cleanser is a light, crisp, brightly flavored sorbet, the perfect antidote to an overloaded tongue and a full-to-bursting belly. Zut!'s house-made version of the frozen dessert is exemplary. The season's ripest fruit (summer strawberries as of this writing) are puréed with a bit of sweetened water, then chilled until cool and refreshing. The result tastes like freshly plucked fruit distilled to its bright essence. Served with bits of candy-sweet berry and a stomach-soothing ginger cookie, it's a delectable way to scour the maw. (Zut! has a full bar as well, so you could always complement the sorbet with some of that Calvados.)

BEST TURKISH CUISINE

Zatis

4929 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-658-3066, ZatisRestaurant.com

To its devotees, Turkish cooking is the tastiest in the land — Middle Eastern and Central Asian foodstuffs fused at the crossroads of the world into a robust yet refined cuisine brimming with spice and zest. At Zatis, a handsome brick-and-blond-wood Piedmont eatery, owner Zati Uysal brings a fresh, light California approach to traditional Turkish dining, and the results are impressive. Tender, juicy meats and seafood, fresh produce, and house-made extra virgin olive oil star in house specialties like spinach-stuffed filo turnovers; rich, earthy zucchini cakes; grilled calamari with capers and arugula; a hearty, creamy-textured eggplant-tomato-artichoke casserole; spiced-meat dumplings with a minty yogurt sauce; exceptionally tender and smoky lamb shish kebab with a buttery rice pilaf. The dessert menu includes a creamy rosewater-scented rice pudding, flaky, buttery walnut baklava à la mode, and a rich crème caramel with a jazzy undertone of Turkish coffee. The wine list features selections from Turkey's Kavaklidere Vineyards, and a tiny cup of the aforementioned coffee — thick, syrupy, jet-black caffeine served grounds and all with plenty of sugar — makes a marvelous digestif.

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD HANGOUT

The Baltic

135 Park Place, Point Richmond, 510-237-1000, BalticJoint.com

What makes a hangout a hangout? Is it the food? The music? The atmosphere? The clientele? Is it the way the bartender stirs your martini, or the nook out back where you can relax over drinks on a sunny day? Or is it that indefinable something or other that makes you say 'I'm home'? The Baltic has been Point Richmond's premier hangout since 1904, and after more than a century as town speakeasy, bordello, nightspot, restaurant and bar the place has become a venerable symbol of neighborly good fellowship. This dimly lit old Victorian is creaky with character, from its exposed brick and its red glass to its worn wood and vintage mirrored-back bar. But it also sports a tiny gallery lined with colorful modern art and a sunny beer garden with arbors, picnic tables, and its very own (tiny) waterfall. There's a dining room where you can sup on German grub like bratwurst, spaetzle, sauerbraten, and strudel, and several nights a week the sounds of jazz, rock, and blues ring from the tiny stage, encouraging local and visitor alike onto the well-trod dance floor. Most importantly, the affable barkeeps and friendly regulars make you feel right at home. What we have here, in other words, is a hangout.

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Categories We Didn't Think Of

BEST GERMAN /EUROPEAN FOOD *Speisekammer*
— sobgirl

BEST LATE NIGHT EATS
I know there are not many but Rudy's is great and serves till after midnight.
— rahulsaak

BEST AMERICAN RESTAURANT
Wood Tavern
— HahaheisGirl

BEST OVERALL RESTAURANT
Scarr's
This place is great, amazing, fantastic and should be more widely known! — *jae*

BEST BEER BAR
Beer Revolution
There are a plethora of specialty beer "bars" in the East Bay nowadays, just to lump them in with "bars" is a mistake.
— jm

BEST BEER GARDEN
Jupiter!
— JEDward

BEST DAY DRINKING
Li Quinns
— serafish

BEST BUBBLE TEA
Green Bubble
— mmoq

BEST PLACE TO SIT OUTSIDE AND STUDY WHILE EATING TOAST AND DRINKING TEA
Julie's Coffee and Tea, Alameda
— bethany

BEST PLACE TO FIND RECENT TRANSPLANTS OR CAL GRADS
Bakesale Betty's
— the entity

BEST SMOOTHIE SHOP
Crush
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BEST LATE NIGHT DELIVERY
Nude Sushi
— leslie.muang

BEST PLACE TO EAT AND DRINK WHILE HEARING LOCAL JAZZ MUSICIANS
Cioccolata di Vino
— tphnmax

teaspoon-sized prix-fixe tidbits have their place, but when you're in the mood for a big platter of comfort food — homey, satisfying sustenance that soothes the soul as it pleasures the belly — head to Nex, Hi-Suk Dong's hip little temple to the deep, rich flavors of Southern Europe and Northern California. Plump green beans are grilled and served with a creamy poached egg and Green Goddess dressing. Velvety gnocchi studded with chunks of porcini mushroom drip with luscious mascarpone. There are marrow bones rich with fatty, gooey goodness; creamy risotto ribboned with chanterelles, squash blossoms, and truffle oil; free-range chickens pressed with a brick and baked until tender, juicy, and golden; medium-rare lamb noisettes served on a bed of buttery puréed cauliflower. Soups and chowders are warm, thick, and nourishing, tasty pasta dishes are crafted on the premises, and for dessert you can indulge in a lush, dark, bittersweet chocolate pot de crème or crunchy spears of hot-from-the-fryer funnel cake with raspberry sauce. Perfectly crafted classic cocktails and the wonderfully eclectic wine list provide comforts of their own.

BEST BAR THAT ALSO LOOKS LIKE YOUR LIVING ROOM

The Layover

1517 Franklin St., Oakland, 510-834-1517, OaklandLayover.com

The lounge is back, guys. Or maybe it never left. Either way, hard edges, weird lighting, and ultra-modern decor have all been replaced by gently worn couches and throw pillows, and it's now totally acceptable — cool, even — to spend your evening in an establishment that more or less looks like your own home. This, if you haven't realized, is fantastic news. And no local bar takes the comfy-chic aesthetic more seriously than The Layover, whose owners reportedly found its furnishings not at chichi furniture stores but at flea markets and antique shops, intentionally opting for a vintage, cozy vibe that feels more like your eccentric aunt's house than the hip, young-skewing, perpetually trendy bar that it is. The furniture's mismatched, most of the art on the walls is for sale — and the crowd, like the space itself, anything but pretentious.

BEST ART IN A RESTAURANT

Spice Monkey

1628 Webster St., Oakland, 510-268-0170, SpiceMonkeyCafe.com

Spice Monkey is easily the most attractive restaurant in Oakland, inside and out. Housed in a stunning orange and black building — once home to the Robert Howden & Sons tile showroom, the name of which still emblazons the edifice — the restaurant's stained glass-and-tile facade gives way to a light-filled Mediterranean-style dining area with a tile floor, a gently bubbling fountain, and a fireplace. Glass lanterns hang from the ceiling, a painted tile staircase leads to an upstairs lounge space, and there's greenery and dark wood everywhere. Given all this, it should come as no surprise that Spice Monkey's art is anything but an afterthought. The restaurant's co-owners see themselves as curators in their own way, and take pains to seek out and display talented, under-the-radar local artists for their rotating wall exhibits.

BEST REIMAGINED RESTAURANT

The BoilerHouse Restaurant

1414 Harbour Way South, Richmond, 510-215-6000, BoilerHouseRestaurant.com

It's hard to forget you're dining in a former Ford assembly plant — the largest such facility on the West Coast, no less — when eating at the BoilerHouse in Richmond. Yet that goes to the designers' credit: the chic industrial setting pays heartfelt homage to the building's past without being trite, with many original features still intact. The 525,000-square-foot, quarter-mile-long plant was constructed more than eighty years ago and featured the requisite assembly lines plus a railroad shed and a pier with a one-acre hangar. During World War II the plant was retooled for the production of military vehicles, and it eventually closed entirely in 1956. After an extensive restoration effort, the building now serves modern uses including live entertainment at the Craneway Pavilion and the offices of solar company SunPower — but the experience of eating fresh American food in a former boilerhouse right on the Richmond waterfront seems to trump all.

BEST HIGH-END VEGAN DISH

Vegan Charcuterie at Gather

2200 Oxford St., Berkeley, 510-809-0400, GatherRestaurant.com

We can't figure out what's greater: the oxymoronic shock value of chef Sean Baker's signature dish at Gather, or the sheer exuberance of its execution. Vegan "charcuterie". Though the menu sets off the second half of the name in quotation marks, it's sort of a pointless demarcation. The four to six elements described in the constantly changing dish read like a mini thesis on the potential of vegetables, nuts, and seaweeds in a kitchen with an inventive spirit. Baker turns out highly concentrated vignettes of seasonal vegetable cookery composed on boards that look like mini bread peels. There might be tiny carrots cooked sous vide, sunchoke carpaccio with wisps of greens that look like garden thinnings, a custard made from beet juice (called "blood" in keeping with the faux charcuterie theme) served with a simulacrum of goat cheese made with cashew milk. Even when one element doesn't quite work, the combined weight of intention and effort add up to a mighty tour de force even lovers of actual charcuterie — the kind not set off by inverted commas — can applaud.

BAR WITH THE MOST DIVERSE CLIENTELE

The Avenue

4532 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-654-4423

Sure, Oakland is a diverse city, but when it comes to socializing, most subcultures tend to balkanize — the heshers over here, the hip-hoppers over there, the burners somewhere in between. Not so at The Avenue. Due in part to the neighborhood demographic, Temescal's beloved dive bar attracts all sorts of folks: the Ethiopian and Eritrean residents, East Bay Rats, tattooed metal heads, grungy fixie riders, people who look like they're from Castro Valley, artsy hipsters, jocks, wallflowers, and whoever else. Appropriately, the Internet jukebox provides the soundtrack: The Notorious B.I.G. one minute, Queens of the Stone Age the next. Best of all, there never appears to be any hint of turf war about whose bar this really is — and they all co-mingle over the pool table. The drinks are stiff and cheap, the bartenders no-nonsense, and the homey vibe as unpretentious as you can get. Yep, totally Oakland.

BEST RETRO COCKTAILS

Forbidden Island Tiki Lounge

1304 Lincoln Ave., Alameda, 510-749-0332, ForbiddenIslandAlameda.com

Forbidden Island doesn't just serve tiki-themed drinks; it's also dedicated to reviving authentic recipes and preparations featuring fresh squeezed juices and house-made syrups. Its fidelity is laudable (and quite tasty) though not without a dash of incongruity given the ersatz nature of Polynesian pop. The drink menu includes classic Mai Tais, Fog Cutters, and Zombies, as well as potions gathered from historic aloha spots stretching from the Virgin Island's Soggy Dollar Bar to San Mateo's much-missed Luau. Original drinks such as the Neptune's Garden play upon Forbidden Island's Alameda home, and the bar's top shelf features locally sourced spirits from Hangar One, Junipero, and Charbay. The lounge is a friendly place, with a comfortable bar complemented by thatched roof booths, a few open tables, and a patio. Events are coordinated by Will "The Thrill" Viharo and include themed DJ sets, movie nights, luaus, and Monday night Black Orchid sessions with master mixologist Suzanne Long. Friday and Saturday nights draw a crowd, which makes the mid-week happy hour doubly happy for the demophobic tiki drinker.

MOST DIVERSE FOOD COURT

Emerybay Public Market

5959 Shellmound St., Emeryville, 510-652-9300, EmeryMarket.com

Maybe you're in the mood for a taco but your friend feels like Thai food and your heart is demanding a plate of jerk chicken. With one easy trip to the Emerybay Public Market's international food court you can summarily fill everyone's plates and fulfill their palates with a ridiculously diverse offering of foods from across the globe by nearly two dozen vendors. You might stop by Sweet Gyros & Pitas for a delicious sampling of Greek salad, pita bread, and superbly spiced sliced lamb, or treat your taste buds to some sautéed spinach and spicy chicken curry at Pamir Afghan Cuisine. While it's admittedly far from world-class dining (some of the sushi and salad bar offerings are subpar at best), this food court definitely has the worldwide element going for it. It's like taking a trip around the world — with fewer airplane rides and more cafeteria trays.

BEST TRANSPORTING

Brennan's

700 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-0960, BrennansBerkeley.com

Somewhere along the way, airplanes and train stations lost their romance. Tom Hanks did all he could for airports in *The Terminal* but even the nicest guy in Hollywood couldn't save them from utter despair. Thankfully, there is still hope for trains: Brennan's, a Berkeley institution since 1959, serves as the perfect spot to sit and watch the trains go by while enjoying the romance and mystery — where are all the people going, what's their story? The rumble, clatter, and commotion as the metallic machines pull out of the Berkeley station is perfect alongside a pint and piles of comfort food favorites such as carved meat, mashed potatoes, and boiled cabbage, all topped with gravy. Brennan's serves two things perfectly: regulars and Irish coffees, and you'll always find both at the bars. With sports on the TV and a reliable blue plate special (even if the plate is white), you can slip back into a simpler era where baggage fees, delays, and crowded seats were only worries of the future.

BEST CEVICHE

La Furia Chalaca

310 Broadway, Oakland, 510-451-4206, LaFuriaChalaca.com

Of the many ways to prepare raw fish — sushi, *lomilomi*, *poke* — ceviche may be the tastiest and most luscious. Marinating seafood in seasoned citrus juice until "cooked" (that is, until firm and opaque) dates back to Peru's Incas, and at La Furia Chalaca, a handsome family-run Peruvian restaurant near Jack London Square, the ceviche is worthy of any pre-Columbian emperor. Impeccably fresh squid, prawns, and sea bass emerge from their marinade tangy with lime and the bite of chili pepper, their flesh juicy and tender, their sweet, briny flavor delectably enhanced. Like all of the restaurant's dishes, it's served in a colorful, artfully arranged mosaic with its traditional accompaniments, hominy, yucca, and sweet potato — a feast for eye and taste bud alike.

BEST GRUB AT A NIGHTCLUB

Disco Volante

347 14th St., Oakland, 510-663-0271, *DiscoVolanteOakland.com*

So far, the music lineup at Disco Volante — a relatively new downtown establishment co-owned by Kevin Cook, Dow Patten, Kenny Annis, Tim Tolle of the Ruby Room, and Damon Gallagher of the band Damon & the Heathens — has shown a high level of creativity and a willingness to take risks. But the real highlight here is the food. Everyone is talking about those crispy avocado tacos with jicama slaw, the fried green tomatoes, the smoked sausage, and the ribs (which seem to have disappeared from the menu, but will hopefully make a triumphal return). Sure, it's one of those places that serves a $14 burger. But keep in mind that said burger includes bacon jam, pickled pepper mayo, and other extravagant condiments. Surely it's worth every penny. ●

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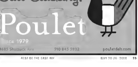

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Sports & Leisure

Best sports league: Bay Area Derby Girls

Chris Duffey

BEST SPORTS LEAGUE

Bay Area Derby Girls

BayAreaDerbyGirls.com

By now, pretty much every chick wants to strap on a pair of skates and punch people. The Bay Area Derby Girls (B.A.D.), founded in 2004 by a couple of thrill-seeking ladies, helps women act out this fantasy, with tryouts available for their teams: Oakland Outlaws, Berkeley Resistance, Richmond Wrecking Belles, and the San Francisco ShEvil Dead. These different branches display some of the most bad-ass gals in the Bay Area, rocking skin-tight spandex and neon makeup smeared across their faces. But the true appeal comes in their carefully honed skills. They slam each other against walls, push each other over, and take plenty of spills onto the hard racetrack floors. Since it was founded, B.A.D. has attracted more than seventy full-time participants, as well as a lot of hopefuls who injured themselves along the way. Not that they would ever let a few flesh wounds get in the way.

BEST GYM FOR PEOPLE WHO HATE THE GYM

Flex Circuit Gym

3925 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-653-FLEX, FlexCircuitGym.com

When 24 Hour Fitness shut down its beloved "Fit Lite" location on Piedmont Avenue, locals were heartbroken. Where else could a gym hater get a cheap, quick, and kick-ass workout without a single sweaty, grunting heavy lifter in sight? And then came Flex. The new gym's owners wisely stuck with the thirty-minute circuit training theme — a stunningly effective mix of weight machines and cardio stations, whether you're a fitness newbie or marathon runner who is fed up with traditional gyms. The interior was treated to a sleek makeover, new types of cardio machines were added to the mix, and members were soon invited to mix it up with twice-weekly boot camp classes at a nearby school. But in a stroke of brilliance, some things didn't change — like some of the stellar employees from the Fit-Lite days, who keep the gym and its diverse clientele in fabulous shape.

BEST BIKE TRAIL

Bay Trail

www.BayTrail.org

The Bay Area is damn beautiful. Thanks to the Bay Trail, people can bike the five-hundred-mile shoreline trail that spans the entire Bay Area. The trail loops all the way up to Napa and down to San Jose, with especially scenic stretches through Oakland, Albany, and Berkeley. The trail was initiated thanks to a state Senate bill passed in 1987 directing the Association of Bay Area Governments to create a loop through the Bay Area. The group created the Bay Area Trail Plan in 1989 to develop this proposed stretch, which is now governed by a board of 28 volunteers. The trail lets people get the chance to bike through some of California's most famous foliage and scenery, including the coastal redwoods and the cliff sides of the bay. Plus the stretches are well-maintained, allowing for an adventurous and active daytrip without the hassle of having to bushwhack.

BEST BOOT CAMP

Oakland Adventure Boot Camp

OaklandBootCamp.com

Sometimes you need more than just a thirty-minute jaunt on the treadmill a few days a week to really wake your body up. And what better way to get a sweat going than boot camp? Sure, you have to wake up at 5:30 a.m. and work out for an hour Monday through Friday for four weeks, but Oakland Adventure Boot Camp will get you in shape. The workouts for women are led by certified trainers Anna Gunn and Jennie Vetel, who combine yoga, Pilates, drills, obstacle courses, and other activities to get heart rates going and all parts of the body toned. The boot camp, which also has workout options in Berkeley, Walnut Creek, and Lafayette, is made for the seasoned triathletes and couch potatoes alike. Whatever fitness level you're at, Oakland Adventure Boot Camp will offer

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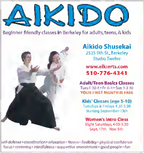
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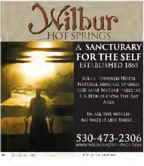
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Tim Thompson

BEST ATHLETE (PRO)
Monte Ellis and Stephen Curry (tie)

BEST BIKE RIDE
Bay Trail

BEST BIKE TOUR
East Bay Bike Party and East Bay Winery Bike Tour (tie)

BEST BOOT CAMP
Oakland Adventure Boot Camp

BEST CALIFORNIA CASINO
Cache Creek

BEST CALIFORNIA SKI RESORT
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Oakland Running Festival

BEST HYBRID SPORT
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BEST MARTIAL ARTS STUDIO
East Bay Martial Arts

BEST OPTIONS AT A GYM
Downtown Berkeley YMCA

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Tilden Regional Park

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BEST PARK

Tilden Regional Park

2501 Grizzly Peak Blvd., Berkeley, 510-843-2137 EBParks.org/parks/tilden

Tilden Regional Park packs a punch with its enormous variety of activities. There's a carousel and steam train for the kids, an interactive animal farm, and Lake Anza to swim in, not to mention shaded hikes on the park's 2,079-acre property. The land is gorgeous, with flowers and small ponds adding variety to the different paths that meander through the park. The area is easily accessible in the Berkeley hills, with adequate parking and ample space to unload the car for a day picnic. The trails are well maintained, varying in steepness and ability levels for the experienced hiker or the casual stroller. There's also plenty of grass to lie out on after a long hike, where people can relax and enjoy some sun. Tilden is the ideal mix of kid-friendly activities and quiet trails, perfect for a family outing or a mellow day of reflecting while walking among oak trees.

MOST UNLIKELY VENUE FOR BOARD GAME GEEKS

Mr. Green Bubble

4298 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-788-4180

One of the bajillion new bubble-tea slash froyo joints that have opened up in the Bay Area in the past few years, Mr. Green Bubble doesn't initially appear to have anything to set it apart from the crowd — the pleasant, brightly lit space and above-average drink and frozen yogurt selection notwithstanding. But those in the know head straight to the back of the shop, where the owners keep a bookcase stocked with a surprisingly well-curated selection of board games. We're talking serious "new-school" strategy games like Puerto Rico or Maori, as well as quirky, lesser-known word games like Quiddler — none of that Yahtzee or Trivial Pursuit nonsense. Throw in the fact that the shop serves some of the tastiest Taiwanese-style fried snacks (popcorn chicken, anyone?) in the East Bay, and Mr. Green Bubble is the perfect place to while away a few hours on a lazy Sunday afternoon.

BEST KILLER AMATEUR ATHLETE

Tarah Murrey

Last season was the most successful in the history of Cal Women's Volleyball, as the Bears shared Pac-10 championship honors and went all the way to the NCAA finals before losing to national powerhouse Penn State. Hopes are high in Berkeley for another deep post-season run in 2011, and for good reason. All-American outside hitter (and East Bay native) Tarah Murrey returns for her final season, providing the Bears with a formidable presence on the front line. Strong, agile, and court smart, the six-foot-three Murrey is a spiking machine: she had 5.2 "kills" per set last year, more than double the rate of any of her teammates. With the graduation of teammate and fellow All-American Carli Lloyd, Murrey goes from being the Bears' scoring leader to being their leader, period. If you want to witness astounding athleticism (from great seats at a bargain price, incidentally) check out Murray and the Bears at Haas Pavilion this fall.

BEST PLACE TO FILL IN YOUR GRID

Bay Area Crossword Tournament

BayAreaCrosswords.org

If you're one of the millions of Americans who starts the day with *The New York Times* crossword, why not step it up a notch and join like-minded folks for a puzzling afternoon at the annual Bay Area Crossword Tournament in Alameda? For a modest entry fee (proceeds benefit the California Dictionary Project) you'll get a chance to solve four yet-to-be-released crosswords provided by the Times' crossword editor Will Shortz and to test your speed and accuracy against local wordsmiths. Five-time American Crossword Puzzle Tournament champion Tyler Hinman (one of the featured solvers in the 2006 documentary *Wordplay*) often participates in the September event as a judge, and you might just bump into the creator of one of your favorite puzzles: many of the "constructors" published regularly in *The New York Times* are Bay Area residents.

BEST WAY TO RUN AROUND LAKE MERRITT

Clockwise

Among Lake Merritt's small army of runners, walkers, and joggers, the clockwise-versus-counterclockwise debate runs quiet but deep. Powerless to the forces of habit and muscle memory, most folks end up planted so firmly on one or side or the other that they can't fathom running the lake's 3.4 mile perimeter the opposite way. Ultimately, it's a personal choice, and there's no right or wrong answer. However, if there were a right answer, it would most definitely be clockwise. A battery of completely unscientific field studies have concluded that this is the slightly less popular route — which means, of course, fewer bodies to weasel past and/or get stuck behind. But, more importantly, there's something about the wind on the southeast side of the lake. Go the wrong way — meaning counterclockwise — at the wrong time, and it'll damn near blow you over. But go clockwise — especially along that stretch between Lake Chalet and the gazebo — and you'll feel like you're flying.

BEST PLACE FOR FAMILIES TO SWIM ON A NOT-SO-HOT DAY

Cull Canyon

18627 Cull Canyon Rd., Castro Valley, 510-537-2240, EBParks.org/parks/cull_canyon

If it's a foggy summer day in Berkeley and Oakland, get thee to Cull Canyon. It's a popular spot for residents of Castro Valley and the surrounding area, but it's not on the radar of many North Alameda County residents. It should be. Just a fifteen-minute drive from Oakland's Fruitvale district off I-580, Cull Canyon is often sunny when other parts of the East Bay aren't. Plus, it's a beautiful and clean park, complete with covered picnic area and a sandy beach lagoon. Parking is always free. And lifeguards are extra-vigilant. They make everyone take a swim test before allowing anyone to swim to the floating dock. Still, everyone, even babies, can splash in the shallow waters and enjoy the 1.5-acre lake, which won a landscape design award in 1996 from the governor's office. One thing is true: You're probably not going to bump into many Rockridge soccer moms here. Instead, it's more of a working-class crowd from Hayward, Castro Valley, and San Leandro.

Best party on two wheels. East Bay Bike Party

Chris Duffey

BEST PLACE TO TAKE THE KIDS ON A HOT DAY

Lake Temescal

6500 Broadway and 6502 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, 510-652-1155, EBParks.org/parks/temescal

It's hard to believe that anyone reading this wouldn't have visited, or at least heard of, the wonders of Lake Temescal, located at the junctions of highways 13 and 24. But just in case you haven't, hear this: Lake Temescal on a warm summer's day is one of the most fun, convenient, and social experiences in the East Bay. There are two separate picnic areas. And one of the park's lesser known secrets is that there's a lovely rustic beach house right above the lake that's great for weddings, with a large open stone deck, garden patio, and stone staircase where flower girls and the bride can walk down to greet an adoring wedding party. But the highlight of Lake Temescal is, of course, the lake, which is open through fall. On weekends, it's hopping and we almost guarantee you that you'll bump into someone you know. And since it's so close to civilization (the Rockridge district is just minutes away), the park district calls this spot an "urban oasis." We agree.

BEST PARTY ON TWO WHEELS

East Bay Bike Party

EastBayBikeParty.wordpress.com

Inspired by bike parties in surrounding areas, the East Bay Bike Party brings together cyclists and cyclists alike for monthly rides through the streets of Berkeley, Oakland, and elsewhere. And no, it's not the same thing as Critical Mass. Bike party rides are organized with designated routes and leaders. Bike partiers make a point to stop at all stop lights and only take up one lane on the road. Otherwise, the rules of the Bike Party are pretty simple: arrive with a bike, dancing shoes, and road rule-abiding, non-confrontational friendly vibes. Oh yeah, and be prepared to party.

BEST SUMMER DAY CAMP FOR KIDS

Camp Kee Tov

1301 Oxford St., Berkeley, 510-848-2372, CampKeeTov.org

You may have seen kids walking around the East Bay sporting colorful T-shirts from Camp Kee Tov. After scratching your head about its meaning (kee tov means "because it's good" in Hebrew) you should know this: The camp is simply awesome. Based at Congregation Beth El in Berkeley, the campers spend most of their days at cooled spots in Tilden Park, playing Squal, getting drenched in goop on Messy Day, and singing their hearts out with their new best friends. What this camp is best known for is its spirit and its high-energy staff, led by its current director Zach Landres-Schnur, a late-twentysomething sports writer-turned-camp-head-extraordinaire. One example: To make sure parents are up to date on when the buses leave camp to take children back to respective stops in Berkeley and Oakland, Landres-Schnur tweets the exact moment the buses leave so that parents don't have to stand at the bus stop dumbfounded. Though this is a Jewish camp, you don't have to be to attend. And, as an added bonus, Camp Kee Tov-ers will learn the joys of drinking fuzzy milk, a foamy liquid poured at great heights that was developed and branded at camp, and if you ask us, should be trademarked.

BEST DEAL FOR FAMILY FUN

East Bay Regional Park District Annual Pass

EBParks.org

Forget country clubs, expensive trips, and pricey tickets to water parks. For just $95 a year, your entire family can enjoy the East Bay Regional Park District's 65 spots in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. That means 108,000 acres, including 1,200 miles for hiking, biking, and nature study, all included in the annual membership, which covers two adults and up to four kids. The membership includes parking and swimming, so when you show up at your favorite park, there's no need to shell out any cash: simply flash your plastic card at the ranger and walk right in, whether it's Lake Temescal or Cull Canyon. And don't forget the district's other great parks as well: Lake Anza in Berkeley, Briones near Pleasant Hill (where it's fun to ride your bikes past cows munching on grass), and the cute farm at Ardenwood in Fremont. Your new status as a park district member gives you a freedom to check out parks you may have not thought to visit before, and provides new opportunities during the dog days of summer.

BEST CHEAP KIDS' DAY OUT

Kennedy Park

19501 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward, 510-670-7275, HaywardRec.org

Those of us with small children know that one-stop shopping makes everything much easier, whether it's picking up dinner on the way home from preschool or keeping the ol' ankle-biters entertained on the weekend. For a truly all-encompassing (but inexpensive) kids-day-out experience, swing down to Kennedy Park in Hayward. A buck-fifty buys a ride on the cheerful, Thomas the Tank Engine-esque "Kennedy Express" or on the classic metal carousel, which boasts 36 jumping horses and 2 chariots and has been in operation in Hayward since 1965 (before that, there was a 10-year stint at Oakland's Robert's Park). Or if the wee bairns won't settle for anything but the real deal, try a pony ride for $2. Want more? Check out the bounce house, Triple Pines petting zoo, tennis courts, picnic areas, or either of the two ginormous play structures replete with eleven slides,

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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST ATHLETE (PRO)

Brandon Crawford
He may be a GIANT, but born and raised he calls the East Bay home sweet home!! — *Xanadufalls*

Jennie Weeks
Dread the dreds — *mgwhoe*

BEST BIKE RIDE

Grizzly Peak
If you can make it up and survive the no shoulder — *Russell KB*

BEST CALIFORNIA CASINO

Wow, do you guys have cameras, yep you guessed in my Backyard
— *malkoss*

BEST CALIFORNIA SKI RESORT

Squaw
Back before I hurt my ankles — *immortal-ling*

BEST ENDURANCE CHALLENGE

Eating five gallons of ice cream
— *malkoss*

Every day at work?
— *jewelsup*

My kids
— *bocanbear*

Keeping your mouth shut when the in-laws come to visit
— *BayMomma*

Using BART restroom
— *huffngwater*

BEST HYBRID SPORT

Beer pong
— *djcurating*

Shamanic Cheerleading
— *Jalena*

BEST PARK

Albany Bulb
SAVE IT! — *alsuggy*

Thousand Oaks
For the "under four" crowd. — *Auntie Lover*

monkey bars, and a zip line. How much you wanna bet the tikes will fall asleep in the car on the way home?

BEST FISHING SPOT

Lake Chabot

17600 Lake Chabot Rd Castro Valley, 888-327-2757 option 3 ext. 4536, EBParks.org

The first rule of fishing is that it's not about catching fish. If that were the case, people would go fishing at Safeway. Fishing is about hanging outside having a beer and relaxing. Part of the East Bay Regional Parks District, Lake Chabot was originally built as a reservoir in 1874 and began allowing recreational uses in the 1960s. Now the 315-acre lake and 280-acre Fairmont Ridge offers picnicking, hiking, and interpretive trails and the lake is stocked year-round with trout and catfish. It's hard to believe that the picturesque setting, more akin to the Sierra Nevada Mountains than San Francisco, is only a dozen miles from downtown Oakland. The spot with a small bait and snack shop is perfect for kids learning how to fish or experienced anglers taking a boat out onto the lake while families barbecue back on shore. It's quaint, quiet, beautiful and who knows, you may even catch a fish. If not, who cares?

MOST SCENIC RUN

Strawberry Canyon Fire Trail

Dirt staging lot on Centennial Dr behind Memorial Stadium, Berkeley

"Scenic" in the East Bay hills may as well mean "hilly as hell." Sure, those steep climbs can do wonders for fitness, but sometimes all you want is a nice, flat fire trail. You'll find it in Strawberry Canyon just above UC Berkeley's Strawberry Canyon Recreation Area, where a broad but mostly wooded dirt road leaves an easily accessible staging area, climbs gradually for 1.5 miles, then travels a few more miles along relatively flat, fast, and natural terrain. Eucalyptus and native plants crowd the path, wildlife is present even given the high level of foot traffic and interesting views of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory campus are plentiful. But at one spot in particular, where benches allow an opportunity to stop and rest, the view is as rich as anywhere else in the hills: the Campanile, the flats, the bay, the bridge, and the gleaming Pacific Ocean.

BEST OUTDATED FITNESS CENTER

Parcourse Fitness Challenge on the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail

Southwest end of the trail, EBParks.org/parks/trails/lafayette_moraga

Take a stroll among the outdated relics of fitness awareness past on the Lafayette-Moraga bike path. Here, roughly between Stafford and Moraga roads, runs the Parcourse Fitness Challenge — a charming little system patented by one Peter Stricker way back in 1975. Each of the dozen or so fitness stations is in remarkably sound condition — and not all are outdated, either. Everyone knows what pull ups, push-ups and sit ups are, and the body curl benches make good sense. But the "step-up" and the "hop-kick," among other exercises, are utterly baffling. Ah well. Mr. Stricker came from a naive and innocent time, a lost era when thirty jumping jacks, fifteen knee lifts, and twenty seconds of Achilles stretch ranked one at "championship par," according to the placards along the trail. And hey, if no one's looking, you might even give the leg hop a whirl for a quick laugh. Otherwise, crank out your pull ups, drop and do fifty, get your abdominals burning, and repeat.

BEST PLACE TO ... BAREFOOT

Piedmont High School Track

800 Magnolia Ave., Piedmont

Surely you've heard all the hubbub about barefoot running. Whether you're a runner or not, you know that folks young and old are stripping off their trainers and running free — or, for those wary of taking the plunge, switching to minimalist shoes featuring flat, cushion-free rubber soles and thin mesh uppers like the Vibram FiveFingers and the Merrell Trail Glove. The trend is still hot after a few years of growth, but the actual transition from cushion to none is never as easy as it seems. That's why a place like Piedmont High School's running track, open to the public on weekends and weekdays after classes, offers an ideal learning environment. For true barefooters, the safe, clean track surface, adjacent to a soft turf surface provides a perfect opportunity to toughen up the feet without worrying about street and sidewalk debris. For everyone else, the environment offers an ideal setting in which to focus on form and engage new muscle groups — one lap at a time.

BEST POOL HALL

Thalassa

2367 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley 510-848-1766
ThalassaBar.com

Sure, bars are great, but sometimes it can be a little dangerous to just sit around and drink. With an open tab, a large selection, and nothing to do but chat with the bartender, watering holes can quickly get expensive. That's why activities at bars are a good choice: They offer things to do so you can set down your glass now and then. The popular Berkeley bar Thalassa offers dozens of pool tables to potentially interfere with overindulgence that may come after a few too many hours sitting and sipping. Dimly lit with an open yet inviting floor plan, Thalassa is a popular spot for college students looking to unwind after a long week in class. The drinks are reasonably priced, and there's also shuffleboard available for those who aren't into billiards. But the best perk? They accept pool table reservations for two or more during weeknights, perfect for when you're planning your day and know for a fact that you want to slam a few balls before the night is through.

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST PLACE TO PLAY BOARD GAMES

My house

You people play board games outside? — *speak_nine*

BEST YOGA STUDIO

Flying Yoga

I have hit up my fair share of yoga studios in the Bay Area but this is by far my favorite. Every class I have been to has had exceptional teachers, from a variety of genres, all committed to making it the most friendly, accessible, supportive atmosphere possible. There is something for everyone. I've felt challenged, yet never overwhelmed, by every class. — *mustkeatripin*

Monkey Yoga Shala

A great place to build your endurance for sexy jams — *Snark*

You know what it do son. Monkey Shala Yoga — *M_Charee*

Yoga to the People

Because you can't beat donation-based yoga — *erismj2*

BEST YOGA ACCESSORIES

Goodwill on San Pablo

I have found nice yoga tanks there for only $2.99. — *pheather7*

Lululemon

But I need a trust fund. — *Jill-anna*

Pants

Yoga outfits are hot, ladies. I so approve. — *speak_nine*

BEST HYBRID EXERCISE

Zumba Fitness at Flying Yoga Shala

4308 Telegraph Ave., Oakland 510-200-4612
FlyingYogaShala.com

In this post-modern age, people need as much distraction as possible. Thanks to Zumba, exercisers can have the million-miles-a-minute variety they need in their everyday lives. Zumba's dogma, after all, is "ditch the workout, join the party." This fitness craze started in Colombia in the 1990s but has only now caught on in the States and more than 125 other countries. It combines squats and lunges with heavy-duty salsa, mambo, and other high-cardio dances, creating a heavy-duty workout that keeps peoples' attention. Now more than 12 million people flock to weekly classes to get their Zumba fix, opting to dance instead of spin or lift. Oakland's Flying Yoga Shala offers Zumba classes four days a week at various times of the day. But their classes go beyond a workout: Select Zumba classes perform as well, such as during a halftime show at a Golden State Warriors basketball game this past January. Talk about motivation to keep you going back to class.

BEST CIRCUS HUB

Kinetic Arts Center

785 7th St., Oakland 510-444-4800, KineticArtsCenter.com

Are those dance classes getting a little too routine for you? Then try doing it twenty feet off the ground, dangling from a rope by the tops of your toes. In the Aerial Arts class at Oakland's Kinetic Arts Center, instructors will help you make it look effortless to fly around in the splits at ceiling level. If heights aren't your thing, the center has plenty of other options for both budding circus performers and average Joes/Janes looking for an alternative to lifting weights at

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Categories We Didn't Think Of

BEST ALTERNATIVE EXERCISE
Athletic Playground in Emeryville, Aerial Acrobatics
— Lauren Vermogat

BEST DANCE STUDIO
StepsOnToes
— lauriemarinpoff

BEST ZUMBA CLASSES
Flying Yoga Shala Studio
— McAnna

MOST MAMA-BABY-KID FRIENDLY YOGA STUDIO
Cynthia Denise welcomes mamas, papas and babies and kids of all ages at the Wednesday morning class at Mosher Yoga Shala — *loveyogini*

BEST WAY TO SPEND THE AFTERNOON
Walking around Lake Merritt and Children's Fairyland
— Lee Bee

BEST WAY TO GET AROUND
By bike!
— ekmdr

BEST STREET TO BIKE ON
Mandela Parkway
— pengara

BEST SOCCER CAMP
My Yute Soccer
— joannadaleyfe

BEST HIKE
French Trail in Redwood Park
— karenl

BEST LOCAL ROAD TRIP
Niles Canyon near Fremont
— dcovdrea

the gym. For those more inclined to watch the circus than join it, the Kinetic offers the sensational — and very reasonably priced — showcase featuring clowning, acrobatics, juggling and more.

BEST MARTIAL ARTS STUDIO

Gracie Jiu-Jitsu

3645 Grand Ave., Piedmont, 510-384-1010, OaklandBJJ.com

Fourth-degree Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu black belt Eduardo Rocha brings this popular martial art to the East Bay at Gracie Jiu-Jitsu. The combat sport, which first came about in the 1880s, uses grappling and ground fighting with plenty of chokeholds as a form of self-defense. All of these various techniques give participants a workout that focuses on endurance and strength as well as concentration and planning various moves in advance. At Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, you'll get thorough instruction from Rocha, who makes sure that no student is left behind during instruction. The studio has blue padding on the walls in case of major slamming, and various hanging flags add color and decoration to the space. Offering classes for students of all levels, including beginning, advanced, kids, and for women, Gracie Jiu-Jitsu makes Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu accessible for everyone, even if it's their first time stepping on the mat.

BEST YOGA STUDIO

Groove Yoga

2240 Oxford St., Berkeley, 510-296-5092, GrooveYoga.com

Tucked into Berkeley's up-and-coming Westside of campus, this yoga studio is growing as quickly as its neighborhood. Opened last November, Groove Yoga offers power yoga classes perfect for the athletic yogi looking to get his or her heart rate going. Sure, there's a Buddha statue in the studio and reggae lightly playing in the background, but at the end of the day the teachers make sure to balance out meditation with some quickly flowing vinyasa poses. Select classes are also heated to 90 degrees or warmer to really get the blood flowing. The studio is clean and organized, with cubby holes available to tuck away street clothes. There are always free towels and lemon water, and sometimes Matt, the resident Saint Bernard, is lying around in the lobby. But perhaps the best part of this new studio is the introductory rate of $30 for thirty days of unlimited yoga. Now that's zen-inducing.

BEST SWIMMING POOL

Trefethen Aquatic Center at Mills College

5000 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland, 510-430-2170, Mills.edu

There's nothing like a dip in the pool to snap even the crankiest back down to earth. Tucked into the wooded Mills College campus, the Trefethen Aquatic Center's swimming pool is the perfect place to go to after a long day at the office. Water joggers and Michael Phelps wannabes alike will find the swimming pool accommodating, with students, retirees, and everyone in between hitting the wide lanes for a full-body workout. There's always a giant box full of kick boards, pull buoys, and water jogging straps perfect for adding variety to what may otherwise be a monotonous sport at times. The staff is always friendly and the lifeguards actually watch the swimmers, a feat not always accomplished at other public pools. Plus there are men's and women's locker rooms with lockers available to rent for $25 per semester, along with showers and soap available for free. But perhaps the best part is the hot tub next to the pool. It's warm, large, and heavily jetted, pounding away the fear of going into the office yet again tomorrow. ●

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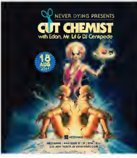

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EVENTS & ATTRACTIONS

East Bay Chefs Fight With Food

At the East Bay Food Fight, some of our best chefs are put to the test.

Anyone who has spent time inside the kitchen of a busy restaurant knows it's an inherently intense environment, with chefs and cooks of all calibers shuffling about in a kind of controlled chaos, hurrying to get dishes prepared, plated, and finally whisked away to the tables and mouths of hungry customers. Add to that already hectic scene an audience of hundreds, two emcees announcing each chef's every move, and a couple cameras transmitting the madness onto a large screen, with only fifteen minutes to execute a meal, and you have yourself the East Bay Food Fight — a live cooking competition pitting six prominent local chefs against one another in three one-on-one battles, their efforts assessed by a panel of celebrity judges.

Kitchen of Champions students.

This is the first year of the *Iron Chef*-style competition, a fundraiser for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County's Kitchen of Champions Culinary Training Program, which prepares unemployed and otherwise disadvantaged Bay Area residents for culinary careers. And if the smorgasbord of notable chefs and famous foodies on the bill is any indication, the East Bay restaurant scene from which the cook-off draws will yield some fierce competition. Some of the seven scheduled judges include Chez Panisse proprietor Alice Waters, *Iron Chef* judge Anya Fernald, and Gather restaurant's Sean Baker, voted *Esquire*'s 2010 "Chef of the Year."

Competitors have already been paired off for the competition at Jack London Square Pavilion (98 Broadway, Oakland) on Saturday, July 23, with FIVE restaurant's Banks White cooking against Picán's Dean Dupuis, Rick Hackett of Bocanova battling Bellanico's Jonathan Luce, and À Côté's Matt Colgan contesting celebrity chef Nikki Shaw. Each duo will work within the confines of one of three culinary themes — "dinner date," "dessert nostalgia," or "summer picnic" — and must incorporate a secret ingredient into their swiftly assembled dishes.

Luce, whose restaurant recently hired a graduate from the Kitchen of Champions program, said that his quick knife skills should work to his advantage in the event's fast-paced, public atmosphere. But regardless of his culinary dexterity, the Bellanico chef said that fifteen minutes is a very small amount of time in which to conceive and cook a dish, especially on a stage surrounded by spectators and cameras. "I'm just hoping that I don't chop the tip of my finger off," he said, half-jokingly.

Event manager Michele Valenti Moore said that while the Food Fight is being publicized as a competition, it's meant to be more of a friendly contest. "We don't want the whole event to be based around the battle," she said. "We also want to showcase the restaurants." Tasting booths from more than forty local wineries, breweries, and eateries will be set up throughout the pavilion, along with culinary demonstrations and an auction offering bidders the opportunity to dine with Mayor Jean Quan (at her place or yours).

Luce said that in his seven years working in the Oakland restaurant scene, the city's culinary climate has changed tremendously, and events like the Food Fight are good indications of that evolution. "The fact that there are even enough restaurants to have a competition like this is a major change," he said. 4:30-7:30 p.m., $35-$100. 510-636-4247 or EastBayFoodFight.org.

— Cassie Hartwood

ATTRACTIONS

Churches and Temples Walking Tour Meet in front of the church for a historical walking tour of Oakland churches, including a history of their development and subsequent influence on the city. To RSVP call 510-238-3234 or e-mail AAdam@OaklandNet.com. Sat., July 23, 10 a.m. Wed., Aug. 17, 10 a.m. Sat., Sept. 17, 10 a.m., Wed., Oct. 19, 10 a.m., free. First Presbyterian Church, 2619 Broadway, Oakland. 510-287-0700. FirstChurchOakland.org.

Feast for the Beasts Step inside the zoo's elephant enclosure for a feast to watch the animals eat. With samples from Revolution Foods and Plum Organics, a performance by Pasaporte band, and more. Children under two years old are not allowed in the elephant exhibit. Sat., July 23, 1-3 p.m., free with regular admission. Oakland Zoo, 9777 Golf Links Rd., Oakland. 510-632-9525. OaklandZoo.org.

Historic Bridges on the San Francisco Bay Cruise A three-hour historical cruise around the Bay, Golden Gate, and San Rafael bridges. Includes lunch. Call 510-627-1215 for tickets and information. Sat., July 23, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. $40-$65. USS Potomac, 540 Water St., Oakland. 510-627-1215. USSPotomac.org.

Immigration Station Cruise and Tour A docent-led tour around Angel Island, including a tram ride and a tour of the island's Immigration Station. Includes lunch. Call 510-627-1215 for tickets and information. Wed., July 27, 9:45 a.m.-3 p.m. $75-$80. USS Potomac, 540 Water St., Oakland. 510-627-1215. USSPotomac.org.

Oakland Grand Urban Gardens Award Art and Garden Tour Take a tour through West Oakland and learn about the area's history and resources. Attendees are encouraged to bring bicycles. Concludes with a raffle. Food from Phoenix and West restaurants, and a performance by [illegible]. Sat., July 23, 2-5 p.m., free-$40. BrownPaperTickets.com/Event/186571. Marston Campbell Park, 1700 Market St., Oakland.

Oakland Chinatown Walking Tour Meet in front of the plaza fountain for a historical walking tour of Oakland's Chinatown. To RSVP call 510-238-3234 or e-mail AAdam@OaklandNet.com. Wed., July 27, 10 a.m. Sat., Aug. 20, 10 a.m. Wed., Sept. 21, 10 a.m. Sat., Oct. 15, 10 a.m. Pacific Renaissance Plaza, 388 Ninth St., Oakland.

Oakland Heritage Alliance Walking Tour: Fairyland and Lakeside Park Kathleen DiGiovanni leads a walking tour exploring the history of *Fairyland*, followed by a tour of the Lakeside Garden Center and a stop at the Lawn Bowling Club, which was founded in 1903. Meet at Fairyland's Nogo Shoe. Sun., July 24, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., free-$15. 510-763-9218. OaklandHeritage.org. Children's Fairyland, 699 Bellevue Ave. (at Lake Merritt), Oakland. 510-452-2259. Fairyland.org.

Remembering Richard Tuck: A Celebration of His Life In addition to the museum's regular attractions, a handful of special events to celebrate the life of Playland creator Richard Tuck, including a display of those original [illegible]. July 23-24, 10 a.m.-8 p.m., $10-$18. Playland-Not-at-the-Beach, 10979 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito. Playland-Not-at-the-Beach.org.

Return to Earth Celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11's return to earth. Part of the museum's "Living Ship Day" series. Sat., July 23, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., $6-$15. USS Hornet Museum, 707 W. Hornet Ave., Alameda. 510-521-8448.

Waterfront Flicks: Big Night Watch *Big Night*, a movie about two brothers' efforts to save their failing Italian restaurant, on the lawn at Jack London Square. Screening begins at sundown. Bring lawn chairs for pizza-cooking demos, Italian music by accordion player [illegible], trivia games, and more. Thu., July 21, free. JackLondonSquare.com. Market Lawn at Jack London Square, Water Street, between Broadway and Harrison St., Oakland.

FAIRS, FESTIVALS & FIESTAS

Wild West Days Street Party With live music by the California Cowboys, street vendors and entertainers, beer and wine, and more. On B St. in Hayward, between Foothill Blvd. and Watkins St. Thu., July

PICKS

Eight Arms Ink-Spitting Contest and Release Party

Even if you're [illegible] at a formal wine tasting, it's generally bad form to spit your Syrah onto the floor — especially in large quantities and across great distances. But the owner of Eight Arms Cellars invites people to do just that at the Eight Arms Ink-Spitting Contest, where wine-lovers compete to see who can spit the cellar's selections the farthest. If you prefer imbibing your alcohol, samplings of recently released wines will be on-hand, with pair-able foods by chef Ulfe Gustafson, and grape juice — because kids love spitting even more than adults. At World Ground Cafe (3408 Jackson St., Ste. 4, Oakland) on Thursday, July 21, 6–8 p.m. $20. RSVP to 510-932-9909 or lala@EightArmsCellars.com — *Cassie Harwood*

Lake Merritt Joggers and Striders

The Lake Merritt Joggers and Striders running club was founded in 1977, and every month since has hosted a Fourth Sunday Run around its namesake lake. That's 34 years, or a bit more than four hundred months — and that means four hundred Fourth Sunday races. (Bay to Breakers is only now hitting its one-hundredth running — call us in three hundred years and we'll talk.) These days the club offers five distinct "events" at its Fourth Sunday Run — the 5K (one lap), 10K, and 15K, plus a one-hundred-yard kids' dash and a half-mile youth run. Bring the whole family to the Sailboat House (568 Bellevue Ave., Oakland) on Sunday, July 24, for a morning of friendly racing and a healthy dose of tradition. Registration begins at 8:15 a.m., races at 8:40 a.m. $3-$5, under 13 free. LMJS.org — *Nate Seltenrich*

MLK Jr Shoreline Park Habitat Restoration

If you're a fan of nature and not so much a fan of trash, the Golden Gate Audubon Society, the East Bay Regional Park District, and REI have organized a volunteer clean-up effort to help restore the marsh at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline Park (Doolittle Dr. and Swan Way, Oakland). The effort, on Saturday, July 23, entails removing invasive plants and garbage from the area to promote the growth of native plants and to help the endangered California clapper rail and other bird species. Bird experts will also give guided walks throughout the park. 9 a.m.–noon, free. RSVP to 510-527-4140 or REI.com/Berkeley. GoldenGateAudubon.org — *C.H*

91, 5:30-8:30 p.m., free. HaywardCA.gov.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Holistic Allergy Relief Dr. Jill Cane, chiropractor and owner of Berkeley Allergy Relief and Chiropractic clinic, discusses how to holistically manage allergies in children. Sat., July 23, 2-4 p.m., free. Pharmaca Integrative Pharmacy, 1744 Solano Ave., Berkeley. 510-527-8930. Pharmaca.com.

Sun Protection Licensed aesthetician Gabriella Chavez talks about the best methods for protecting your skin from sun damage, as well as the best sunblock to use for your skin type. Sat., July 23, 2-3 p.m. Pharmaca Integrative Pharmacy, 5720 College Ave., Oakland.

KIDS

Hip-hop and Bounce: [illegible] Movement for Preschoolers An introduction to rhythm and dance for children ages 3 to 5. [illegible] moves to games and free dance. Call 510-482-7844 to register. Saturdays, 10:30-11:30 a.m., [illegible] through July 30. [illegible] Public Library, Dimond Branch, 3565 Fruitvale Ave., Oakland. [illegible]. OaklandLibrary.org.

East Bay Moms Stroller Walk Intro at the totem pole in front of the Nature Center for a stroller walk around the lake. Bring lunch for a picnic following the walk. Fri., July 22, 10 a.m., free. EastBayMoms.com. Lake Merritt, 600 Bellevue Ave., Oakland.

East Bay Moms Stroller Walk Bring your [illegible] for a one-hour walk along a flat, paved trail at Lake Chabot. Marina parking is $5, with exact change required. Walk commences before dark. Wed., July 27, 6:30 p.m., free. EastBayMoms.com. Lake Chabot Regional Park, 17600 Lake Chabot Rd., Castro Valley. 510-247-2639. EBParks.org/Parks/Lake_Chabot

[illegible] Chemistry The [illegible] laboratory is the demonstration of [illegible] via reactions produced from [illegible] and [illegible]. Sat., July 23, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., free with general admission. ChabotSpace & Science Center, 10000 Skyline Blvd., Oakland. 510-336-7373. ChabotSpace.org.

Seussical the Musical Kimberly Dooley directs this play with [illegible] for Seuss characters like Horton the Elephant and The Cat in the Hat. With music by Stephen Flaherty. Contact the theater for [illegible] dates and times. July 14, 27 and Aug. 4 are "pay-what-you-can" nights. Through Aug. 14. $15-$33. Julia Morgan Center for the Arts, 2640 College Ave., Berkeley. 510-845-8542. JuliaMorgan.org.

The Show Must Go On A youth circus performance presented by the Prescott Circus Theatre. With juggling, acrobatics, hip-hop dancing, and more. Reservations recommended for large groups. Through July 21, 11 a.m. & 1:30 p.m., free. 510-482-1024. PrescottCircus.org. Malonga Casquelourd Center, 1428 Alice St., Oakland. 510-238-7219. MalongaCenter.org.

Sports Play Day A day of traditional and non-traditional sports, with prizes, for kids ages 5-13. Thu., July 21, 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., free. [illegible]. Live Oak Park, 1301 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-981-6700. CI.Berkeley.CA.US/ContentDisplay.aspx?id=12676.

RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

[illegible] Thunder: The Hidden Lives of Powerful Leaders The senior pastor of City of Refuge UCC San Francisco, presiding bishop of The Fellowship, and CEO of Ark of Refuge talks about power and corruption, and how to obtain a proactive, rather than reactive response to it. Part of the school's five-week Tuesday Night Talk series. Tue., July 26, 7-8:30 p.m., free. Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-8206. PSR.edu.

SALES, PROMOTIONS, & FUNDRAISERS

Not-A-Con For those who can't make it to the San Diego Comic-Con, meet local artists selling their comics and art. Wear a costume for discounts on titles and a chance to win a costume contest. Sat., July 23, 1-7 p.m., free. Fantastic Comics, 2026 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-848-7898. FantasticComics.net.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Bay Area Black Expo A community gathering and exposition of African-American businesses, academic businesses, and other community resources. July 23-24, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., free-$15. 510-473-7736. BayAreaBlackExpo.com. Coliseum, 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland.

Hal Carlstad Social Dinner Dance An annual dinner to celebrate the life of activist and BFUU member Hal Carlstad, who died in 2007. The event honors Cindy Sheehan (Gold Star Mothers for Peace), Karen Pickett (Earth First activist), and others. Proceeds benefit the renovation of Fellowship Hall. Fri., July 22, 6 p.m., $20-$35. Fellowship Hall, 1924 Cedar St., Berkeley. 510-841-4824. www.bfuu.org.

Happy Hour Cruise Two-hour [illegible] on the [illegible] Estuary with live music, light appetizers, and a bar. Guests on the first cruise may stay for the second trip at no additional cost. [illegible] Celebrations Pierside at the foot of Broadway between Jack's and Scott's restaurants. Thu., July 21, 5:15 & 6:15 p.m. $10-$20. [illegible]. CelebrationsOnTheBay.com. Jack London Square, 56 Broadway, Oakland.

History Cafe A public potluck for tour guides, volunteers, and history fans to discuss Oakland's history. Wed., July 27, 6-7:30 p.m., free. Peralta Hacienda Historical Park, 2465 34th Ave., Oakland. 510-532-9142. PeraltaHacienda.org.

SPORTS & OUTDOORS-PARTICIPATORY

Bike Meets Town A leisurely community bike ride around Albany with bicycle safety reviews and a tour of prevailing bike lanes in the city. Followed by live entertainment and food. Fourth Friday of every month, 6:30-7:30 p.m., free. [illegible]. AlbanyCA.org. Solano Avenue Cyclery, 1554 Solano Ave., Albany. 510-524-1094. SolanoAvenueCyclery.com.

Life as an Ohlone [illegible] talks about what life was like for the Ohlone Indians, the first Californians. Enter via the Arroyo Road entrance. Sun., July 24, 10 a.m., $5. Sycamore Grove/Veterans Park, 1051 [illegible] Rd., Livermore. 925-960-2400. LARPD.DST.CA.US/Sycamore_Grove/Sycamore.html ■

Submissions for calendar listings should be e-mailed to Calendar@EastBayExpress.com or mailed to Calendar Editor, East Bay Express, 620 3rd St., Oakland, CA, 94607. Deadline is 14 days prior to the event date.

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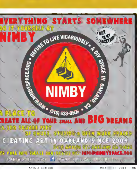

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MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Subliminal Sublime

Christopher Nickel's subtly spiritualized landscapes

In *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, From Friedrich to Rothko*, Robert Rosenblum traces the migration of religious feeling from traditional Christian imagery into the landscape in the works of the German Romantic Caspar David Friedrich in the early industrial age, through various stylistic iterations (Expressionism, Surrealism), arriving a century later at Mark Rothko's dematerialized light and color. He describes an early Friedrich: "A strange quiet reigns over the vast expanse of land. Indeed, the mood is so hushed and meditative that the topographical facts of the distant architecture — the tiny houses and church spires whose diminutive silhouettes are just visible through the haze on the remote horizon — become almost visionary in character, the apparition of some Heavenly Jerusalem viewed across a plain radiant with a quietly glowing sunlight."

Detail from Christopher Nickel's *Untitled Horizon*

The dozen or so color photographs in *Dividing Line* can be seen as similarly poetic, although in a low-key, secular, contemporary vein. Where Christopher Nickel's previous works focused on the industrial landscape reduced by long lenses and long exposures to large rectangular color blocks — gritted, rusted walls abutting gravel-strewn pavements or reflective pools — his current work depicts the Western landscape: Colorado, Lake Tahoe, the Central Valley, Mendocino, Half Moon Bay, and the Golden Gate. Large expanses of land, sea and sky become rectangular curtains or shutters (or metaphorical eyelids) that meet at infinity in these large, untitled prints made from medium-format film negatives. Nickel: "The horizon, evident in every environment ... allows us to orient ourselves within space. In a landscape, the horizon demarcates the limit of what is visible, and is the line that divides the earth and the sky. It also serves to unify, existing as the point of meeting for disparate fields of color and texture. It is this idea of the horizon that I use as a formal starting point ... transforming these expansive vistas into two-dimensional compositions ... between representation and abstraction ... photographs that are more than mere depictions of a location." In Nickel's photo of Central Valley farmlands, furrows converge with the mechanical regularity of railroad tracks. In a photo of Half Moon Bay, shimmering light on slate-like water beneath dark skies implies, if not divinity, at least the daily solar miracle. In photos of Colorado, diffuse clouds resembling white silk undulate above seas of grass, although two mountainscapes have a more turbulent, Romantic air, with light and shadow unbalanced and in movement. *Dividing Line* runs through July 31 at Slate Contemporary (4770 Telegraph Ave., Oakland). 510-652-4085 or SlateArtandDesign.com.

— *DeWitt Cheng*

PICKS

Tiki!

Since Trader Vic's, Tonga Room and Alameda's Forbidden Island dispense that Oceanic feeling in fancy drinks amid replicas of tikis, carved Polynesian heads. These tiki bars now have an artistic rival in Uptown Oakland. *Tiki!* blends contemporary works by 22 local artists, artifacts (tribal masks and war clubs) and ephemera (piano/ukulele sheet music of the Thirties and Forties, easy listening album covers from the Fifties and Sixties, and the timeless kitsch of wahines on black velvet). Emil Barber's lanai and tiki bar, Kyle Milligan's hanging lanterns, and Tim Sherman's faux Gauguin painting and painted lupa mats set the aloha tone that scintillates in works by Alex Cambodia, Gael Pichard rice, Lana Kai, K.G. Greenstein, Nathaniel Parsons, and others. Dashboard-hula-girl photographs by Susan Casentini are also on view. *Tiki!* runs through August 13 (when Tikiwave surf band will play at 8 p.m., accompanied by Spam sushi) at Studio Quercus (385 26th St., Oakland). 510-452-4670 or StudioQuercus.com.

DeWitt Cheng

ART GALLERIES

Ames Gallery. The Still Face of [illegible] New work by Ted Cowles. Through Aug. 29. 2661 Cedar St., Berkeley. 510-845-4949. AmesGallery.com.

Art House Gallery & Cultural Center. Bizarre On the Edge With art by [illegible] Through Sept. 23. 2905 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-472-3170. BerkeleyArtHouse.WordPress.com.

Berkeley Art Center. Abstract Reunion Work by [illegible] Through Aug. 7. **Abstract Reunion Artists Panel Discussion.** [illegible] Sat., July 23, 8 p.m. Free-$10. 1275 Walnut St. (in Live Oak Park), Berkeley. 510-644-6893. BerkeleyArtCenter.org.

Frank Bette Center for the Arts. [illegible] Work by various artists. Through July 30. **Water and Shadows Part II: California Landscapes** The second installation of paintings from the Frank Bette retrospective. Through July 30. 1601 Paru St., Alameda. 510-523-6957. FrankBetteCenter.org.

[illegible] Gallery. [illegible] Through Aug. 1. 2318 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland.

Chandra Cerrito Contemporary. Photo-Synthesis Work by [illegible] Through July 23. 480 23rd Street, Oakland. 510-260-7494. ChandraCerrito.com.

The Compound Gallery. Making the World [illegible] [illegible] paintings by Thomas Haag and [illegible]. July 23-Aug. 20. 1167 65th St., Oakland. 510-817-4042. TheCompoundGallery.com.

[illegible] Arts Gallery. [illegible] Through July 29. 1515 Clay St., Oakland. 510-637-0395. OaklandCulturalArts.org.

David Brower Center. [illegible] Bay Area Artists Envision the Brower With works by 22 Bay Area artists, including Ruth Santee, Claire Brandt, Esther [illegible]. All work is a response to David Brower's quote "Have a good time saving the Earth. Otherwise you're just going to flagellate yourself." Through Sept. 2. 2150 Allston Way, Berkeley.

Eastside Gallery and Boutique. [illegible] With paintings and illustrations of Point [illegible] Presented by the Point Richmond Art Collective. July 23-Aug. 13. 121 Park Place, Point Richmond. 510-778-1480.

Expressions Gallery. [illegible] The gallery's fifth anniversary art show with works by past and current featured artists, including a memorial presentation of the work of the late [illegible]

[illegible] Berkeley. Through Sept. 9. 2035 Ashby Ave., Berkeley. 510-644-8330. ExpressionsGallery.org.

Float Center. [illegible] With paintings by [illegible] and photography by Lily Cail. Through July 23. [illegible] With bronze sculptures by John Rosen and acrylic and oil paintings by Sally Ann Rodriguez. July 24-Sept. 5. 1091 Calcot Place, #116, Oakland.

FM. [illegible] Through July 30. 483 25th St., Oakland. FMOakland.com.

Hearst Art Gallery at Saint Mary's College. [illegible]: A Life in Art A retrospective of the artist's [illegible] paintings, [illegible] and fashion illustrations, from China and Australia, and more. Through Sept. 11. 1928 Saint Mary's Rd., Moraga. 925-631-4379. StMarys-CA.edu/arts/hearst-art-gallery.

The Hive Gallery. Stuffed A presentation of [illegible] sculpture and David [illegible] works, including pieces from her "Loved and Beloved" series. Through July 24. 301 Jefferson St., Oakland. 510-213-4720.

Johansson Projects. [illegible] With [illegible] by Allison Cabrerasteve and new work by Katy Stone, who is known for her large-scale public projects. Through Aug. 13. 2300 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-444-9140. JohanssonProjects.com.

Julie's Coffee & Tea Garden Gallery. Landscape [illegible] made with everything from laundry detergent to motor oil, by Ginny Parsons. Opening party on June 10, 2-8 p.m. Through Aug. 2. 1223 Park St., Alameda. 510-865-2385. [illegible]

Kala Art Institute Gallery. Kala Residency Projects With new work of different artists by Maurice Lienvell Concert, [illegible] Genevieve Bank, and Frances Young. Through Aug. 12. **New Work from Kala** Kala staff members Yuzo Nakano and Mayumi Hamanaka curate the art show with new work by Paloma [illegible] Holly Downing, [illegible]

Marcus. Ron McClain, Simone Pikes, Keiko Shiratsuyushi, Seiko Tashibana, and Richard Wagner. Through Dec. 3. 2090 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley.

MacArthur B Arthur. The New Art Economy Summit and Potluck Dinner Artist and Autonomous Organization organizer Clyde Leland, who did a two-week residency at Royal NoneSuch Gallery, leads the [illegible] discussion and [illegible] to open up a dialogue about [illegible] among networks of artists. [illegible], editor-in-chief of *Art Practical*, [illegible] and artists join the discussion. Bring your favorite dish. Sat., July 23, 4:30-8 p.m. 4001 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland. 510-318-0774. MacArthurBArthur.com.

Mercury Gallery. Grand Opening Art Show With art by Wayne Armstrong, Mark Lightfoot, Dave Waite, Linda Thompson, and Sue Weber. Through July 30. 473 25th St., Oakland. 510-387-2025.

More Listings Online
Get info about dozens more SF art events at EastBayExpress.com or m.EastBayExpress.com

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Anthony Bourdain – "Culinary Bad Boy," Oct. 21
Goran Bregovic and His Wedding and Funeral Orchestra – Trans-Balkan music fest, Oct. 28
Mike Epps – comedian and actor, Oct. 29
What My Husband Doesn't Know – urban comedy play, Oct. 16, 9
Joe Bonamassa – up and coming blues guitarist and singer, Dec. 9

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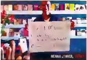
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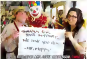
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THEATER & DANCE

So You Think You Can Win

Audience-judged dance competitions a matter of opinion

"Who doesn't want $10,000?" pondered Oakland choreographer Kath Faulkner, artistic director of Little Seismic Dance Company. That was her loot for winning this January's A.W.A.R.D. Show in San Francisco, a dance competition in which the field is narrowed by audience vote. "It's enabled me to be really ambitious and stretch my imagination." Exposure to new audiences didn't hurt, either.

So dancing away with the cash is all good, right? Maybe not. "I have a hard time with the idea of dance, and the art of performing dance, in a competition format," she said. "I was very nervous about entering into something that was going to be divisive. And is the fact that it's liked in this immediate, visceral, 'I'm going to cast my vote for it now' way: is that necessarily the same thing as it being a work of quality?"

Darius Drooh [illegible]

Half a dozen cities host an A.W.A.R.D. Show (the acronym stands for Artists With Audiences Responding to Dance) and critics and dancers alike echo Faulkner's view, describing it as "a popularity contest" that could alienate artists, who supplement minimal funding with generous mutual encouragement.

"If the protocol is not carefully framed, then whoever has the most friends can win," said Joan Lazarus, who produces San Francisco's annual Bang for the Buck competition. "And that doesn't feel so good to me. But you know what? That happens sometimes. This thing that we have with fair/not fair I got over a long time ago, because I just don't think of the universe that way."

Curated by ODC, the A.W.A.R.D. Show entails applications, rehearsals, audience feedback, and expert judges. Bang for the Buck, on the other hand, is utterly democratic: The only requirement is to enroll via e-mail by noon the day before. "They want to compete, I let them compete," Lazarus said. "And the dancing is just mind blowing. You're watching the best dancers in the whole Bay just blow it out for a whole minute. They dance, the audience votes, and then I hand somebody a thousand bucks."

San Francisco's Adam Peterson competed in the A.W.A.R.D. Show and won 2010's Bang for the Buck. His take on audience-judged competitions is a bit different. "It was a great experience, and it was another venue in which I could show an audience what I'm passionate about," he said. "What I felt with each of the competitions was that it really brought together an already strong arts community."

Ultimately, in spite of her misgivings, Faulkner too was pleased "to see how genuinely happy people were for me, and how supportive everybody was of each other," she said. "And I'm very grateful."

Cast your vote on Monday, July 25, when Bang for the Buck happens at Z Space (450 Florida St., San Francisco), 7 p.m. $10. 866-558-4253 or WestWaveDanceFestival.org. — *Claudia Bauer*

COMEDY

All Mouth Show With audience [illegible] plus [illegible]. Thu., July 21, 8 p.m. $10. 510-[illegible]. [illegible]

Anthony Hill [illegible] Sat., July 23, 8 p.m. $10. [illegible]

The Funny [illegible] The New Parish, 579 18th St., Oakland. TheNewParish.com.

Burgo's Comedy All Star Show [illegible] Fri., July 22, 7:30-[illegible] p.m. $10. Burgo's Comedy Lounge, 6503 Regional St., Dublin. 925-264-4413. BurgosComedy.com.

Burgo's Express All Star Show [illegible] Sat., July 23, 7:30-9 p.m. $10. Burgo's Comedy Lounge, 6503 Regional St., Dublin. 925-264-4413. BurgosComedy.com.

The Business [illegible] Businesses, 8 p.m. $5. The Dark Room, 2263 Mission St., San Francisco. [illegible]

Comedy by Women Fourth Saturday of every month, 8 p.m. [illegible]

The Express Grab Bag With 15 professional and amateur comics doing 5-to 10-minute sets. Thursdays, 7:30-9 p.m. $5, plus two-drink minimum. Burgo's Comedy Lounge, 6503 Regional St., Dublin. 925-264-4413. BurgosComedy.com.

Comedy Night [illegible] Thursdays, 8 p.m. Free. [illegible]

Comedy Open Mic Sign-ups @ 5:30 p.m.; each comic gets 4-5 minutes. [illegible] Tommy T's Comedy Steakhouse, 5104 Hopyard Rd., Pleasanton. 925-227-1800. TommyTs.com.

Comedy Mash [illegible]

Mo' Words [illegible] Fri., July 22, 8 p.m. $10. Mira Pearl's Jam House, One Broadway.

Oakland. MiraPearlsJamHouse.com.

Stand 'n' Jam Sign-ups @ 8:30 p.m.; show at 9 p.m. [illegible] Woody's Cafe, 1841 Park Blvd., Oakland. 510-[illegible]. WoodysCafe.com.

Magic & More! [illegible] Saturdays, 8 p.m. $20. [illegible] San Francisco. 415-[illegible]

Marga's Funny Mondays Weekly comedy and variety showcase, featuring a rotating cast of comedians and hosted by local comedian Marga Gomez. Mondays, 8 p.m. $10. The Marsh Arts Center, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley. 510-644-4949. TheMarsh.org.

Saturday Night Comedy [illegible] featuring a rotating lineup of other [illegible] Saturdays, 8 p.m. $15-35 sliding scale. $50 reserved seats. The Marsh Arts Center, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley. 510-644-4949. TheMarsh.org.

SF Comedy Showcase Sundays, 8 p.m. [illegible] Punch Line, 444 Battery St., San Francisco. 415-397-4337. [illegible]

DANCE-PERFORMANCE

Bay Area Follies The Gil Chun Dance Company performs a variety of dance styles, including Broadway, jazz, hula, ethnic, and tap. Sat., July 23, 8 p.m.; Sun., July 24, 2 p.m. $12-$15. GilChun.com. Reda Theatre, 2025 Addison St., Berkeley. 510-540-[illegible]

The Dislocation Express Watch and follow this traveling performance by AXIS Dance Company and Dandelion Dancetheater. Act I begins @ Ed Roberts Campus and travels its way via BART to the Ashby BART Station for a [illegible] act @ 7:45 p.m. Sun., July 24; [illegible] Fri., July 29 [illegible] 510-625-0110. DandelionDancetheater.org. Ed Roberts Campus, 3075 Adeline St., Berkeley. 510-225-6300. EdRobertsCampus.org.

The Dislocation Express Watch and follow this traveling dance performance by AXIS Dance Company and Dandelion Dancetheater. Act I begins at Ed Roberts Campus and weaves its way via BART to the Powell Street BART Station for a third act at 7:45 p.m. Wed., July 27 [illegible] Sat., July 30. [illegible] Ed Roberts Campus, 3075 Adeline Ave., Berkeley. 510-225-6300. EdRobertsCampus.org.

LIVE VARIETY

The Uncomfortable Zones of Fun: Experiments in Experience/Participant Performance [illegible] artist Frank M [illegible] medley of [illegible] and audience [illegible] bring a musical [illegible] and an open mind. Sat., July 23, 8 p.m. Free. 510-520-7668. [illegible] Temescal Arts Center, 511 48th St., Oakland. 510-923-1074. TemescalArtsCenter.org.

THEATER & PERFORMING ARTS

All My Children [illegible] Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 8:30 p.m. Continues through July 23. $15-$50. The Marsh Arts Center, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley. 510-644-4949. TheMarsh.org.

Bonesmoking Deets [illegible] Fridays, Saturdays, 2 p.m. [illegible] Sun., Aug. 14, 2 p.m. Continues through Aug. 20. $12-$15. [illegible] 1312 [illegible] Ave., Berkeley. [illegible]

Compared @ What? Premiere of [illegible] a new play set in 1920 [illegible] during the organization of the [illegible] of Sleeping Car Porters, the first African American labor union [illegible] Fridays, Saturdays, 8 p.m. Continues through July 23. $10-$15. [illegible] Vallejo. [illegible]

Cymbeline The Firehouse Arts Center presents free performances in the park of Shakespeare's fairytale-style play. Bring blankets and picnic materials if desired. [illegible] Saturdays, Sundays, 7:30 p.m. Continues through Aug. 7. Free. 925-931-5340. FirehouseArts.org. [illegible] Valley Community Park, [illegible] Ave., Pleasanton. [illegible]

East 14th: True Tales of a Reluctant Player One-man show by [illegible] native Don Reed. Saturdays, 8:30 p.m.; Sundays, 7 p.m. Continues through Aug. [illegible] $20-$35 sliding scale; [illegible] The Marsh Arts Center, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley. 510-644-4949. TheMarsh.org.

Harvey Eric Hayes directs Mary Chase's 1944 Broadway play about a mild-mannered eccentric named Elwood P. Dowd, whose best friend is an invisible six-foot tall rabbit. [illegible] Fridays, Saturdays, 8 p.m. Continues through Aug. 14. $13-$18. [illegible] Castro Valley. [illegible]

H.M.S. Pinafore Lamplighters Music Theatre presents a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's musical comedy about class, patriotism, and [illegible] a Navy ship. Fri., July 22, 8 p.m.; Sat., July 23, 2 & 8 p.m. $17-$50. 925-943-[illegible] Lamplighters.org. Lesher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. 925-295-1400. LesherArtsCenter.org.

Jesus Christ Superstar Jennifer Nunning directs members of the Youth Express Theater Company in a performance of the rock opera about "the last seven days of Jesus of Nazareth as seen from the [illegible] of Judas Iscariot." With music by [illegible] the rock band, directed by Dave Moschler. Sundays, 2 p.m.; Wednesdays-Saturdays, 7:30 p.m. Continues through July 30. $12-$20. 510-595-5500. [illegible] Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby Ave., Berkeley. 510-841-6500. ShotgunPlayers.org.

Lend Me a Tenor Leslie [illegible] directs this "flat-farce" comedy set in the high stakes world of the opera. For ages 12 and up. Show starts at 7 p.m. on Sundays; dinner and box office [illegible] Through July 31, 7:30 p.m. $25-$39. Concannon Vineyard, 4590 Tesla Rd., Livermore. 925-456-2505. ConcannonVineyard.com.

Measure Lisa A. Tromovitch directs this performance of William Shakespeare's [illegible] Fridays, Saturdays, 7:30 [illegible] p.m. Continues through July 30. $25-$30. 925-443-2273. LivermoreShakes.org. Concannon Vineyard, 4590 Tesla Rd., Livermore. 925-456-2505. ConcannonVineyard.com.

Metamorphosis [illegible] piece about a traveling salesman's [illegible] transformation [illegible] Written by David Farr and Gisli Orn Gardarsson, adapted from the novella of the same name by Franz Kafka, directed by Mark Jackson. [illegible] 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Through July 24. $40-$55. Aurora Theatre, 2081 Addison St., Berkeley. 510-843-4822. AuroraTheatre.org.

A Midsummer Night's Dream [illegible] of Women a Will, an all-female Shakespeare company [illegible] Shakespeare's play [illegible] July 23-24, 2 p.m. [illegible] 510-420-0813. WomanaWill.org. [illegible] Park, 3650 Harris Rd., Oakland. 510-482-1852. OaklandNet.com/Parks/ [illegible]

Moved @ Musicals: The Musical! [illegible] Playhouse presents this witty musical [illegible] classic Broadway [illegible] directed by Arthur Atlas. Reservations can be made online at [illegible] or by calling 510-235-4632. Fridays, Saturdays, 8 p.m. $20. Point Richmond [illegible] 135 Park Place, Point Richmond.

Scapinoides Writer, actor, and director E. Lacy Jr. performs this [illegible] directed monologue about technology's sometimes [illegible] effects on intimacy and dating. [illegible] July 21, 8-9:30 p.m. $10-$15. 510-[illegible] Laney College Theater, 900 Fallon St., Oakland. 510-464-3543.

Using the Power of Musical to Tell Your Life Story Stagebridge, a theater company for seniors aimed at breaking down stereotypes about aging, presents a performance and discussion. Please RSVP by calling 510-663-3600. Thu., July 21, 3:30-5 p.m. Free. AgeSong Lake Merritt, 1630 [illegible] Street, Oakland. 510-992-3000. www.AgeSongLM.com.

The Verona Project Original musical inspired by Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, written and directed by Amanda Dehnert and produced [illegible] by Cal Shakes. [illegible] July 31. [illegible] Bruns Memorial Amphitheater, 100 Gateway Blvd., Orinda. 510-548-9666. CalShakes.org.

Woman to Birthright A one-woman multimedia performance by artist and activist Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene. [illegible] a mixture of poetry, film, dance, and music. Fri., July 22, 8 p.m. $12-$15. La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-2568. LaPena.org.

PICKS

The Verona Project

Perhaps the most impressive thing about Cal Shakes' latest production, a rock musical loosely based on Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is that each cast member plays at least two instruments in addition to singing and acting. All that talent combined makes for a pretty tight eight-person rock band. Aewen Anderson handles the guitar and woodwinds, in addition to playing the female lead Julia. Manoel Dunkowny plays guitar, keyboard, and several bit-parts. Adam Yazbeck plays mandolin and piano, as well as the Duke of Milan. The play itself, written and directed by Amanda Dehnert, is a liberal interpretation of the bard's original script, with one gender change and most proper names left the same: The duke's daughter Sylvia becomes Sylvio, which precipitates not one but two gay courtships, in addition to some cross-dressing. Dehnert puts her characters in a sort of magical realist universe where sexuality and gender seem ancillary to desire and love. At moments, it's beautiful. Through July 31 at Bruns Amphitheater (100 California Shakespeare Way, Orinda). $35-$66. 510-548-9666 or CalShakes.org. — *Rachel Swan*

The Dislocation Express

Journey forces to explore the effects of disconnection: the always innovative AXIS Dance Company and Dandelion Dancetheater question love, fate, and social media in *The Dislocation Express*, [illegible] exchange between Sunday and next Saturday, July 24-30. The physically integrated group performs choreography by Dandelion's Eric Kupers and Kimiko Guthrie on platforms, plazas, and trains, accompanied by live folk music and Guthrie's poetry. Act I begins at 6 p.m. at the Ed Roberts Campus, where the Ashby BART station (3075 Adeline St., Berkeley); at 6:45 p.m., ride BART with the performers to a new station for Act II (Walnut Creek, Sun. and Fri.) and Act III (Powell St., Wed. and Sat.), which start at 7:45 p.m. Download the MP3 for music, poetry, and flash-mob instructions if you'd like to take part. Meet the cast after the Friday performance at Pyramid Alehouse (1410 Locust St., Walnut Creek) at 8:45 p.m. Free (supply your own BART tickets). 510-645-0110 or DandelionDancetheater.org. — *Claudia Bauer*

THEATER REVIEW

THE SF MIME TROPE

This year's *2012 — The Musical* is more engaging than previous Mime Troupe productions, but it still relies on an old formula

By Rachel Swan

The best part of last Saturday's San Francisco Mime Troupe performance — held at Frances Willard/Ho Chi Minh Park in Berkeley — happened when a lop-eared rabbit which apparently belonged to someone in the audience sprung loose and tore right up to the foot of the stage. Within seconds a small dachshund was in hot pursuit, followed by the rabbit's owner. The three of them wended through a large crowd of spectators, stepping on blankets, dodging backpacks, and nearly crushing a picnic lunch. The rabbit owner managed to catch her pet just in the nick of time. The dog trotted back to its seat and pouted.

In a way, it seemed apropos of a production that's all about the triumph of the little guy. A fast rabbit can evade a potbellied dog in nature just as a clever workingman can outfox a greedy capitalist in the fantasy world of the San Francisco Mime Troupe. This year's play, *2012 — The Musical*, has all the usual tropes: evil bankers ("banksters," in Mime Troupe parlance), political caricatures, song and dance numbers, sloganeering, Faustian bargains, wolves in sheep's clothing, and, as always, a narrow victory for collectivized labor. Plus, it's topical. While recent Mime Troupe plays have covered everything from the banking crisis to red state-blue state balkanization, *2012* looks at the fate of political art in a market economy.

Specifically, it's about the intersection of art and corporate interests. The drama centers on a small political acting company, Theater BAM!, which accepts a handsome commission from Green Planet, Incorporated. Corporate sponsorship is, of course, a dicey proposition for actors whose favorite credos are "power to the people" and "the revolution will not be downloaded." But it's a necessary evil when one of them has kids to feed and another slings lattes to pay the rent. Not to mention that a land developer wants to demolish their theater to make way for a new parking lot. BAM!'s financial quandary accurately reflects that of many artists in the real world.

Show Details
2012 — The Musical plays Saturday, July 23 at Mosswood Park (MacArthur Blvd. and Broadway, Oakland) and through September 25 at various Bay Area locations. Free. SFMT.org

And it's set against a backdrop of a national economic crisis, as depicted in the play's prologue — actually a play within a play. One of the BAM! actors dons a mask to play President Obama, who falls into the clutches of several banksters — all dressed as Seventies pimps, one with a set of balls hanging from his chin. Evidently, that's the kind of political satire that BAM! is known for. It's only slightly campier than a real Mime Troupe production.

Kate Otles

Michael Gene Sullivan as President Obama.

Written by Michael Gene Sullivan and directed by Wilma Bonet, *2012* is more timely than last year's *Posibilidad* (about workers taking over a factory) and more entertaining than 2009's *Too Big to Fail* (about the banking crisis). A lot of that has to do with the acting. Sullivan, who handles about six roles, is a consummate performer. He can sing, dance, flit nimbly about the stage, portray a sleazy politician or a frustrated actor, and pretty much carry an entire Mime Troupe play by himself if need be. Fortunately, he's accompanied by a several equally talented actors this time around, including Victor Toman (who plays five characters), Cory Censoprano (six characters), and Keiko Shimosato Carreiro (who plays BAM!'s main corporate benefactor, Ms. Haverlock).

Even better than the performers themselves is the script, which has an unusual degree of self-irony. For once, the Mime Troupe manages to make fun of itself by portraying a similarly earnest, similarly beleaguered group of actors. There are barbs against eco-consciousness, as indicated by the very name "Green Planet, Incorporated." (The company purports to be meat-free, wheat-free, dairy-free, free of harmful chemicals, and adamantly pro-compost.) There's even open acknowledgement of how difficult it is to be entirely purged of corporate interests. At one point during Saturday's performance, an actor turned to address the audience. "How many of you work for corporations?" he asked. Of the two hundred or so people assembled, only three hands went up. Someone had to be lying.

The truth is that we can't all be purists. Moreover, we can't all adhere to the Mime Troupe format of staging plays in parks, and passing a hat for donations. The Troupe survives in large part because it relies on a tried-and-true formula. The performances all clock in at a taut ninety minutes, and they're all undergirded by live jazz music from the Mime Troupe House Band (drummer Neil Wadhwani, keyboardist James Anthony Mitchell, and multi-instrumentalist Michael Bello). The jokes seem current, but the themes are extremely recognizable — not for nothing did one wag refer to it on Twitter as "The SF Mime Trope." And with all that said, it still comes with an admirable political message. In a world of dogs, a bunny can still win. ●

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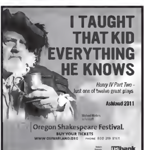

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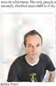
EAST BAY EXPRESS

LECTURES & LIT

Little Birds, Big Questions

Anders Nilsen's philosophizing finches

In 1996, University of New Mexico senior Anders Nilsen began doodling birds in a sketchbook. "I was a painter and installation artist with grand plans," Nilsen recalled. "Looking back I think doing the strips was a way to be playful with my work again and have fun. Turn the pretension down a notch. Eventually I just realized it was more fun and rewarding than the other work I was doing. So I gave up more or less on the other work and devoted myself to the little birds." The little birds in question are the protagonists of *Big Questions*, a flock of gray finches living out their small lives in a windswept, remote wilderness. The only people around are a developmentally disabled man-child and his grandmother, minding their own business as the birds try to puzzle out the world. "That proved to be a theme," Nilsen said, "that kept me going for six hundred pages."


Anders Nilsen

Those six hundred pages, drawn and written over the last fifteen years — with time off to create other works, including the Ignatz Award-winning *Don't Go Where I Can't Follow*, Nilsen's tender memorial to his late fiancée — comprise a newly released collection which Nilsen will present and sign Wednesday, July 27, at Pegasus Books (2349 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley). *Big Questions* starts out cute but then bad things begin to happen. One bird's mate disappears, as does their tree home; another finds herself bullied into guarding a fallen bomb her friend believes to be an egg. Someone dies. A plane crashes. And the birds go on trying to make sense of it all with only their limited cache of experience to guide them.

Big Questions is subtitled "Or Asomatognosia, whose hand is it anyway?" Nilsen first heard the word in an interview with neurologist and author Oliver Sacks, who writes in *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* of patients who forget, disown, or deny some or all of their own body — usually an arm and hand. "When pressed on whose it might be," said Nilsen, "women will often say that it belongs to their husband, whereas men will often say it belongs to their mother-in-law. The story in *Big Questions* is a lot about how people see things happen in the world and then try to come up with reasons for them. I like the idea of asomatognosia as a sort of metaphor for our tendency to displace our own responsibility for our place in the world."

Nilsen's style is elegant, minimal, and meditative. His storytelling is abstract, his humor dry. Birds talk; humans don't. Yet it is the birds who are most mysterious, who keep us reading. "Early on I played with the idea of trying to differentiate them from one another with markings or the shapes of their tails or something," he said. "But in the end I decided that there's something sort of compelling about their sameness. They all have very different attitudes about what's happening, but because they look the same, hopefully it makes it easier to identify with all of them in turn — or at once.

"Part of the reason I was able to stick with it is that I found it tremendously entertaining," he said. "Every time I would come back to it to see what these little birds were up to, they'd surprise me a little bit." 7:30 p.m., free, 510-649-1320 or Pegasus.indiebound.com

— Stefanie Kalem

LECTURES

Annemarie Roeper: 50.0+ Signs Beyond Old Age: Essays on Living and Dying The 90-year-old author and Roeper School for Gifted Children founder discusses her new book about the challenges of aging, and also signs her children's books. Sun., July 24, 2-4 p.m., Gaumenkitzel, 2121 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley. 510-647-5016, Gaumenkitzel.net.

Gallnya Marlon Roeper Fire Breath Book: Bloods Whitfire at the Island of Tassajara The author and Zen student reads from her book, a true story about the monks who risked their lives to save the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center (the oldest Zen Buddhist monastery in the US) when a massive wildfire surrounded it. Thu., July 21, 7:30 p.m., Ms. Galloway's, 2904 College Ave., Berkeley. 510-704-8222, birdsflitways.com.

Kathleen Barry: Unmaking War, Remaking Men The Professor Emerita of Penn State University challenges the masculinity of war and reveals through the ongoing wars of today how and why peace is only possible with the remaking of men. Tue., July 26, 7 p.m., Revolution Books, 2425 Channing Way, Berkeley. 510-848-1196, RevolutionBooks.org.

Mark Elbroch: Bobcat Study: A Guide to Animal American Species The author and biologist talks about his current research on mountain lions and signs copies of his book. Thu., July 21, 7-8 p.m., The Book Room, 1500 Solano Ave., Berkeley. 510-526-6252, BookRoom.com.

LITERARY EVENTS

Albany Library Great Books Discussion Group Fourth Tuesday of every month, 1:30-2:30 p.m., free, Albany Library, 1247 Marin Ave., Albany. 510-526-3720, AClibrary.org.

Anders Nilsen The artist and illustrator gives a visual presentation and signing of his new graphic novel, *Big Questions*. Wed., July 27, 7:30 p.m., Pegasus Books Downtown, 2349 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-649-1320, Pegasusbookstore.com.

Big Yes Seniors Discussion Group The group discusses Eckhart Tolle's book *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*. Thu., July 21, 7 p.m., Books Inc., 1344 Park St., Alameda. 510-522-7777, Booksinc.net.

One World, Many Stories: Children's Summer Reading Program A summer's worth of free events for children in each Oakland Library branch, sponsored by the library's Children's Services Department. Visit OaklandLibrary.org for schedule. Through Aug. 13, at Oakland Public Library, 125 14th St., Oakland. 510-238-3022, OaklandLibrary.org.

Conversations with Authors: New Voices in Mexican American Fiction Meet Philip Salom, author of *Nursing Chasmic*; Ethel Symenthe, author of *Loving Back Books*; and Jacqueline Lusch, author of *Searching for This Tamer Set*. July 23, 7 p.m., Books Inc., 1344 Park St., Alameda. 510-522-7777, Booksinc.net.

Elmwood Branch Book Discussion Group A monthly literary circle for adults. Fourth Monday of every month, 6:30-8 p.m., Oakland Public Library, Elmwood Branch, 3409 Fruitvale Ave., Oakland. 510-535-5620, OaklandLibrary.org.

Elizabeth Brundage The author reads from her new novel, *A Stranger Like You*. Thu., July 21, 7 p.m., A Great Good Place for Books, 6120 LaSalle Ave., Oakland. 510-339-8210, GreatGoodPlace.IndieBound.com.

Elizabeth Brundage The author reads from her latest thriller, *A Stranger Like You*. Thu., July 21, 7 p.m., A Great Good Place for Books, 6120 LaSalle Ave., Oakland. 510-339-8210, GreatGoodPlace.IndieBound.com.

Eve Evangelista's Books Book Launch Attend an online launch of the author's new book *Book of Sea Lanterns*, with a discussion on effective marketing techniques, door prizes, and snacks. Registration required by calling 510-795-2627 x20, or e-mailing EvBard-kimba@ACLibrary.org. Tue., July 26, 7-8 p.m., Fremont Library, 6500 Civic Terrace Ave., Fremont. 510-795-2627.

Jack Hirschman The poet reads along with the Revolutionary Poets Brigade, Raymond Sandra Nervas, Dexter Payne, Jon Bryson, Sarah Page, Kimberly Berghman, and Carole Barrow. Hosted by David Reid. Includes refreshments. Fri., July 22, 7-8:30 p.m.

PICKS

Sapphire

Though it's been fifteen years since the publication of *Push*, that book and its author Sapphire, are still very much in the public consciousness, thanks to last year's Academy Award-winning film adaptation, *Precious*. Now comes *The Kid*, which tells the story of *Precious'* son, Abdul Jones, who must confront his violent origins in order to fulfill his artistic destiny. Sapphire reads from *Push's* sequel at Marcus Books (3900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland) on Thursday, July 21, 6:30 p.m., free, but preferential seating given to those who purchase the book from Marcus in advance or at the event. 510-652-2344 or MarcusBookstores.com. — *Stefanie Kalem*

Colleen Morton Busch

In the summer of 2008, California burned. And when the fire near Tassajara Zen Mountain Center grew so intense that even the firefighters were evacuated, five senior monks reversed their exodus, returning to face the blaze. On Thursday, July 21, Colleen Morton Busch visits Mrs. Dalloway's (2904 College Ave., Berkeley) to read from *Fire Monks: Zen Mind Meets Wildfire at the Gates of Tassajara*, her harrowing tale of Zen readiness in the face of fiery disaster. 7:30 p.m., free. 510-704-8222 or MrsDalloways.com. — *S.K.*

Conversations with Authors

The 21st installment of Books Inc.'s (1344 Park St., Alameda) Conversations with Authors series takes place Saturday, July 23, featuring readings by and discussions with fiction writers Jacqueline Luckett, creator of the rousing, midlife chick-lit *Searching for Tina Turner*; Cheo Tyehimba, author of the short story collection *Like Loving Backwards*; and [illegible] Wilson, whose *Surviving [illegible]'s Catcher in the Rye* for the 1970s, came out in 2009. 7 p.m., free. 510-522-2226 or BooksInc.net. — *S.K.*

Pitchapalooza

Have you written a book? Have you told all your friends about it like a hundred times? How about telling someone who might actually help you out — somebody like Arielle Eckstut and David Henry Sterry, authors of *The Essential Guide to Getting Your Book Published: How to Write It, Sell It, and Market It … Successfully*. They'll be at Books Inc. (1760 Fourth St., Berkeley) on Monday, July 25, hearing one-minute pitches for a chance to win an introduction to an agent or publisher. And if you buy a book, you'll get a free consultation. 7 p.m., free. 510-704-8222 or MrsDalloways.com. — *S.K.*

Mythos Fine Art & Artifacts, 1747 Solano Ave., Berkeley.

Kensington Library Book Club This month: *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. Fourth Monday of every month, 7 p.m. Kensington Branch Library, 61 Arlington Ave., Kensington. 510-524-3043.

Montclair Branch Book Discussion Group Fourth Monday of every month, 6 p.m. Oakland Public Library Montclair Branch, 1687 Mountain Blvd., Oakland. 510-482-7810. OaklandLibrary.org.

OPL Golden Gate Book Discussion Group Come share your enjoyment of reading with others in the community. Fourth Monday of every month, 6:30 p.m. Oakland Public Library Golden Gate Branch, 5606 San Pablo Ave., Oakland. 510-597-5023. OaklandLibrary.org.

Pitchapalooza Writers are invited to pitch their book ideas in one minute in front of a group of book publishers ("the American Idol for books"). David Eckstut and David Henry Sterry, authors of *The Essential Guide to Getting Your Book Published: How to Write It, Sell It, and Market It … Successfully* take the event. Buy a copy of the duo's book for a free consultation worth $100. Mon., July 25, 7 p.m. Books Inc. Berkeley, 1760 Fourth St., Berkeley.

School Club Book Club The group reads Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help*. Sun., July 24, 3 p.m. Books Inc., 1344 Park St., Alameda. 510-522-2226. BooksInc.net.

Sharing Books We Love Club members take turns discussing a book that inspired them. Led by Cyril Gomes. Last Wednesday of every month, 12:30 p.m., $5 suggested donation. Unitarient Universalist Church, 1 Lawson Rd., Berkeley. 510-526-2901. UUCB.org.

Slow Reading Dinner Eat food, drink wine, and talk about books. Bring a few words to read aloud and savor slowly. Food by chef Erik Balbuena of Berkeley's Gourmet Cafe. RSVP. [illegible] UniversityPressBooks.com, or 510-548-0585. Fourth Wednesday of every month, 6-8 p.m., $35-$40. University Press Books, 2430 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. 510-548-0585. UniversityPressBooks.com.

Tea and Theater A monthly book group for adults to take turns discussing any book they please. Tea and cookies served. Meeting held in the library's Story Book Room on the fourth floor. Fourth Monthly of every month, 3-4 p.m., free. Berkeley Public Library Central Branch, 2090 Kittredge St., Berkeley. 510-981-6100. BerkeleyPublicLibrary.org.

PUBLIC INTEREST

Advanced Clean Car Regulation Community Meeting A meeting for community members to learn about and discuss the California Air Resources Board's proposal to "combine the control of smog-causing pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions into a single coordinated package of [illegible] car emission standards." Tue., July 26, 6:30 p.m. Elihu Harris State Building Auditorium, 1515 Clay St., Oakland. (510) 622-2568.

Avatar Metaphysical Toastmasters Club of Berkeley Public speaking club with a metaphysical emphasis. First and third Thursday of every month, 6:45-8:45 p.m. Free. St. John's Presbyterian Church, 2727 College Ave., Berkeley. 510-845-6830.

Behind-the-Scenes Look: Back Kappa When Wildlife Meets an Oil Spill Bird Wildlife Care Network staff members Becky Elias, Erin Wheeler, and Kyra Lake Parker discuss the animal rescue process that followed the 2007 Cosco Busan oil spill. Thu., July 21, 7-9 p.m., free. 510-843-2222. GoldenGateAudubon.org/Education/Speaker-Series. Unitarian Community Church, 941 The Alameda, Berkeley. 510-526-3800.

Community Meeting on Urban Farming Join in the ongoing discussion and efforts to update Oakland's policies around urban farming. E-mail Melody@[illegible] for more information. Thu., July 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m., free. North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland. 510-597-5046.

El Cerrito Democratic Club Meeting The club's July meeting features guest speakers Chuck Barry, of Critical Awareness, and Emily Harris, of Californians United for a Responsible Budget. The duo discuss California's prison-industrial complex, and why funding for prisons should be shifted to fund education, prevention, and interventions. Bring $4 for pizza. Tue., July 26, 6:30 p.m., free. 510-527-5810. El Cerrito United Methodist Church, 6830 Stockton Ave., El Cerrito. 510-525-3880.

Elder's Guild A group for people interested in creating a support system and exploring questions on aging. Second and fourth Sunday of every month, 1:30-4 p.m., free. North Berkeley Senior Center, 1901 Hearst Ave., Berkeley. 510-981-5190.

Fix or Nix: The Environment and Financial Reform Journalist Mark Hertsgaard, author [illegible] discusses with Stewart [illegible] and Lawrence Lessig about how technology can be used to foster environmental sustainability. Thu., July 21, 7:30 p.m. $5-$10. David Brower Center, 2150 Allston Way, Berkeley.

Free Book Exchange Give and get free books of all genres. Berkeley's Sundays, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., free. The Free Book Exchange, 10020 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito. 510-526-1941.

The Grey Panthers Berkeley/East Bay Filmmaker Jean Jaffee discusses her short film about *A Month in Madison: Eyewitness Reports from the Wisconsin Protests*. Everyone welcome. Wed., July 27, 1:30 p.m., free. North Berkeley Senior Center, 1901 Hearst Ave., Berkeley. 510-981-5190.

Juvenile Hall: The Juan Bautista de Anza Expedition The National Park Service ranger talks about the Anza Expedition, and how it helped lead to the settlement of San Francisco and San Jose. Mon., July 25, 7 p.m. Fremont Main Library, 2400 Stevenson Blvd., Fremont. 510-745-1401.

SPOKEN WORD

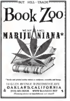
The Monthly Poetry Slam Hosted by Rossuet Ellis and Betsy Ball, with music by 3 Blind Mice. Wednesdays, 8 p.m., $7. Starry Plough, 3101 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-841-2082. StarryPloughPub.com.

The Romance Feed Contests variety show hosted by Alaca Romane. Last Wednesday of every month, 7:30 p.m., $7. Make-Out Room, 3225 22nd St., San Francisco. 415-647-2888. MakeOutRoom.com.

Sparring With Cultural Awards Book Slam Round 29 of the battle of written word-warriors, with Penelope Romano (The Awardees), Brenda Knight (Woman of the Beat Generation), Kathleen Wood (Cafe Barbarian), and other poets of all genres and styles. Sat., July 23, 7:30 p.m., $8. Art House Gallery & Cultural Center, 2905 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-472-3170. BerkeleyArtHouse.WordPress.com.

Storytelling Swap Storytelling open mic hosted by Cathy Book. Third Monday of every month, 7-9 p.m., free. Frank Bette Center for the Arts, 1601 Paru St., Alameda. 510-523-6957. FrankBetteCenter.org.

Sounds, Book Art Open-Mic Night Poets, storytellers, musicians, and all book writers are invited to share their work. Arrive early to sign up. Second and fourth Friday of every month, 7:30 p.m., free. Feedback@WrittenWordArt.com, WrittenWordArt.com. Zocalo Coffeehouse, 645 Bancroft Ave., San Leandro. 510-569-0120. ZocaloCoffeehouse.com.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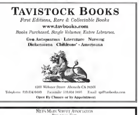
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FEELING FREE

For the week of July 20-26 2011

By Raffee Finn

The planets continue to align in fairly simple patterns this week, but don't let that fool you into thinking that daily life is any less intense than it has been. Despite the absence of astro complexity, the transits of human existence still drive the drama, individual and collective, pressing reactive buttons and triggering old (and most likely negative) patterns. So don't be surprised if you or someone close to you gets swept away on waves of emotion. Also anticipate that a few people might be singing an old familiar "victim" refrain. Be aware: There's very little that you can do to stop this lament. (Other than suggesting a visit to iTunes where you can download Otis Redding's classic "Mr. Pitiful" — it helps to have a good song to sing when you're miserable.)

What you can do is dial down your need to take care of them. I'm not suggesting avoidance, denial or discounting another's suffering. I'm simply advising you to cultivate an objective consciousness capable of discerning a real need in someone else from your own co-dependent urge to be needed.

For those of you experiencing joy — especially joy from the fruits of your own efforts — the week offers an opportunity to pause, take a deep breath and replenish your reserves.

A Jupiter/Pluto trine continues to provide positive support for practical matters, which means there's hope for pulling out of a negative tailspin through the application of common sense. The energy of this trine can be used to organize all sorts of areas — financial, physical, emotional or spiritual. Whether it is cleaning your closets, negotiating a tricky business deal or arranging an exercise schedule, this positive partnership is the antidote to procrastination and the key to accomplishment.

What's more, a Mercury/Mars sextile provides additional positive mental support for making plans. Yes, when Mercury and Mars combine, some minds may find it hard to settle down — but it's important to remember that an active mind is not necessarily negative. It's all a matter of where you focus your attention.

This week, the Sun moves into Leo, the Sign of creativity, forming an immediate trine to Uranus. Uranus is in Aries, the Sign of individuation and exploration, and as it combines with the Sun most of us are likely to feel the power to break free from whatever inhibits authenticity, whether these shackles are real or imagined. Expect surprising and dramatic declarations of independence from just about everyone. Aries and Leo are both Fire Signs, after all, and when they spark each other, they ignite quite a passionate blaze. Use their fire to burn off negative feelings as they arise, and you'll have an easier time aligning with the simplicity of the week.

If you know your Ascendant and/or your Moon Sign, read that, too.

ARIES Align with the most positive picture of reality you can conjure, and then let nothing come between you and your vision. You have a unique opportunity for instant manifestation — make the most of it.

TAURUS The secret of your success in any endeavor, material or spiritual, is to trust your intuition and to act on the basis of your unique understanding of the situation. Apply the rules when necessary and break them when appropriate.

GEMINI Share your ideas freely and generously, and you'll invite a lively discussion that will inspire you as well as others. And don't expect agreement. The value of these conversations lies in the ability to embrace a wide range of perspectives.

CANCER Rather than dwell on how much there still is to do, shift your attitude. Sure, there are miles to go, but personal growth is not a competitive sport, and surrendering to the process guarantees a successful outcome.

LEO Step graciously into the spotlight and as you do, be grateful for your innate generosity of spirit. Remember: The sun is not a planet but a star, and it shares its light equally with every living being.

VIRGO Try not to let negative thinking undermine your plans. Yes, there are obstacles to overcome, but if you spend your time focusing on the difficulties, you will miss an opportunity to experience how easily joy can move a mountain.

LIBRA Your life continues to be about relationships. (Go figure!) But this week is not only about significant others. Contemplate the interconnectedness of life, and notice how that shifts your consciousness into a wider view.

SCORPIO Give yourself permission to move away from the idea that sacrifice means service and that service equals "loss." Instead, think about what you love to do with your whole heart that will also help others to find greater joy.

SAGITTARIUS There is nothing pitiful about your life right now, but if you insist on feeling sorry for yourself, go ahead. The only problem is you'll miss a chance to feel inspired and excited about what you are creating.

CAPRICORN Big tremors continue to disturb the bottom of your psychic pond, and as these waves ripple across the surface of daily life, you could feel slightly disoriented. As always, shifts are much easier when you open to them.

AQUARIUS You're right, there is a lot to coordinate — but you are definitely up to the task. Just prioritize your goals and organize each day around specific tasks, and before you know it, you will have created order.

PISCES You can worry about what isn't getting done, or you can focus on what is working well. This is not about denial; it's about learning to shift your perspective so that the daily flow of energy can sustain a happy heart. ●

For More Info

Raffee Finn specializes in Transformational Astrology. For readings, call 1-888-937-9284, write P.O. Box 343, New York, NY 10025, visit AquariumAge.com, or e-mail Raffee@AquariumAge.com. Copyright © 2011 by Raffee Finn

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Chris Duffey

FROM LAOS TO 23RD STREET

That Luang Kitchen serves up a taste of the familiar

By John Birdsall

There's an organic quality about 23rd Street, the treeless traffic-swept thoroughfare that connects Richmond with San Pablo. It's as if the taco trucks, carnicerías, carwashes, and remittance centers bubbled up directly out of the surrounding flatland neighborhoods, some spontaneous reaction to the need for cheap, vivid food and services with a connection to home.

That home worth connecting to could be in Guatemala or Guadalajara. In the case of That Luang Kitchen, it's Laos. In 1992 Saigon-born Loc Nguyen and his wife Leuksan Sipaseuth — whose family had immigrated from the Laotian capital, Vientiane — opened a market here, on a corner of 23rd Street almost exactly straddling the Richmond-San Pablo border. They named it after Vientiane's grand, gold-stupaed Buddhist temple, Pha That Luang.

That Luang, the market, was also a bit of a deli. Sipaseuth, who received two years of culinary training through Job Corps, then worked five years cooking at the Reno Hilton, turned out house-made chile sauces and pastes for the market's cooler. That Luang became a take-out source for green papaya salad, containers bagged for parties or for sneaking over privately at home.

It was good enough, apparently, to help the market survive for nearly twenty years, one of a small handful of Lao groceries that thrived in the area. And it was good enough for Nguyen and Sipaseuth to launch a little connecting restaurant, That Luang Kitchen.

Then business slowed down at the market. In February Nguyen and Sipaseuth turned it into a party venue, but the market survives via a couple of shelves loaded with cans of *som tum* powder and almond jelly, plastic containers of fish paste, chile sauce, and roasted tomato relish (*jaew mak len*) in the restaurant's drinks cooler, and in the bags of pork rinds and packs of chewing gum at a small table in front. And it survives in Sipaseuth's papaya salad.

Nguyen — who doubles as That Luang's waiter — is a slight man with a shadow mustache and keen look. He asks how many chiles we want pounded up in our papaya salad. Six is hot, three is medium. I punk out. "Maybe three?"

He brings a heap of tan shreds flecked with mint leaves and bits of semi-dried chile as fine as popcorn husks. The papaya sits on a jumble of bruised cherry tomato halves, next to a wedge of raw cabbage in fat ribbons. The sear is only moderate, just like Nguyen said, beneath a fierce lime tang and low rumbling growl of fish paste. It's very good.

Better than good is Sipaseuth's *mok pla*, a sort of delicate catfish loaf steamed in a folded-over square of banana leaf. Pale, boneless hunks of fish hold together in a Kaffir-lime-and-lemongrass-perfumed matrix of coconut milk, green onion, and big, wilted plumes of baby dill.

The browned banana-leaf parcel shares the plate with a heap of boiled greens — soft-steamed Chinese and Western broccoli — and a bowl of that tomato relish I mentioned, Sipaseuth's *jaew mak len*. The tomatoes are roasted till they wither and intensify, picking up a dark, smoky sweetness and slight tannic bitterness. They're mixed with chiles and fish paste, though it's the tomato that defines the flavor. You dab the greens into it, mix a shaggy half spoonful into your sticky rice, grassy-tasting from the reed steaming basket. That Luang's *mok pla* is a dish capable of opening up simultaneously in a few different dimensions — I'd find room for it on any list of East Bay favorites.

Nam kow — Laotian fried rice — is suffused here with the sharp taste of fermented Lao sausage. Sipaseuth doesn't make her own — she buys the bright pink sausages, shaggy with crisp, pale stripes of pork skin — from a company in San Francisco. It shows up coarsely ground in Sipaseuth's *nam kow*, mingling with clusters of broken-up rice crust, the one that sticks to the bottom of the pot. Actually, I wished the rice bits had been craggier, chewier, though the flavor was good — especially after crushing fried Thai chiles and wok-toasted peanuts over the top and wrapping up spoonfuls into mint and cilantro-lined leaves of frilly lettuce.

That same spark failed to ignite chicken *larb*, a pile of chewy, coarsely chopped meat and gizzards with a savory gloss of fish paste and toasted rice powder but little else. And a simple chicken soup with house-made rice noodles, That Luang House Special Noodles, is a soup designed as neutral ground, meant for spicing up with table sauces, but its hunks of boiled chicken in thin-tasting broth were as stiff and leached of flavor as Sipaseuth's *larb*. Still, her white, thickish noodles had chew and a hint of elastic, a texture echoed in mahogany-colored cubes of congealed pork blood.

Whether to honor Nguyen's roots or to lure 23rd Street's non-Lao lunch crowd, it's not clear, but Sipaseuth fleshes out That Luang's offerings with a few Viet dishes, banh mi and pho. Under a headline proclaiming "This Is It!" the Vietnamese combination sandwich (pork, headcheese, pâté) boasts that it's "the favorite of workmen and students alike." It wasn't a favorite of mine, though, thanks to a cottony roll, meats that tasted bland and processed, and vegetables showing lackluster pickle.

Who cares? Nobody but the indifferent — guys like the work-booted Dish Network service tech immersed in his phone while he eats — is likely to stop here for banh mi anyway. It's the long table of Lao-American kids in their twenties, in flat-brimmed MLB caps and sagging pants, judging the *nam kow* by the ones their moms make and debating who serves the spiciest green papaya salad in the East Bay, who know what to order here.

It's clear the guys at this particular table have left the neighborhood. One tells a story about how he almost drove into a shoot-out; another says his mom won't consider moving out, even though her house is in what he calls "the ghetto." "It's hella stupid," he says, except maybe it's not — not while places like That Luang still exist on 23rd Street, serving up a taste of the familiar.

◆

John.Birdsall@EastBayExpress.com

That Luang Kitchen

1814 23rd St., San Pablo
510-232-6265
Cash, Visa, MasterCard
Hours: Tue.-Sun. 11 a.m.-7 p.m., Mon. closed
Reservations accepted

Sample Menu

Papaya Salad	$5.49
Mok Pla	$4.99
Nam Kow	$6.99
Chicken Larb	$6.99
That Luang House Special Noodles	$5.49
Vietnamese Combination Sandwich	$2.49

WHAT THE FORK

OLD OAKLAND'S NEW TASTE OF MEXICO

Plus, changes ahead for Sea Salt, and sweet discoveries in Richmond.

By John Birdsall

When the lunchtime sandwich crowd recedes from Ratto's, Old Oakland can feel semi-deserted, especially on days when the summer fog makes the corner of Washington and 9th feel as dreary as the Outer Richmond. But things are suddenly looking brighter at Swan's Market, the historic food hall beset by closures and a noticeable lack of foot traffic. Cosecha Cafe, a sprawling food stall launched by chef-owner Dominica Salomon Rice, is the first restaurant tenant in a major overhaul of Swan's that began last month with the opening of the Rio de Parras produce stall.

At Cosecha (Spanish for "harvest"), Salomon Rice serves up a farm-driven taste of Mexico from a glass-fronted counter running nearly the entire length of the market's central hallway. The back wall of the former J & S Deli counter now has a broad swath of shiny white subway tiles, next to a patch of wall painted the pale turquoise of the waters off the Yucatan coast. A trio of Nelson bubble lamps gives the space a whiff of mid-century-modern cool, and there are rustic communal tables and stools for perching on.

On a recent afternoon, Salomon Rice was turning out a couple of fantastic tacos ($3.50 each). In one, the house-made tortilla (corn masa sourced from La Palma Mexicatessen) cradled moist hunks of chicken smeared with a Yucatan-style *recado* glowing with achiote. The other revealed thick shreds of Becker Lane pork naked *carnitas*-style, moistened with its chile-fortified braising juices. Chile- and cotija cheese-sprinkled grilled corn ($4) took a street snack and gave it the Northern Cali treatment, thanks to sweet, tender, pale yellow kernels.

The chef — who's cooked at Chez Panisse and in Mexico City — has come up with a formula that Chicago's Rick Bayless is best known for (and that San Francisco chef Traci Des Jardins is mining fine at Mijita), but Salomon Rice has an unmistakably Northern Cali touch. Other recent offerings included a bright-tasting Capay Farm tomato and cucumber salad, posole, a pair of *tortas ahogadas* (smothered sandwiches), quesadilla, and corn tamale. Cosecha Cafe's address is 907 Washington St., Oakland, and hours are Mon.-Sat., 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

Sea Salt Lands New Talent

After longtime chef Anthony Paone stepped away from Berkeley seafood restaurant Sea Salt in January, Scott Gehring took over the kitchen. Now it's Gehring's turn to step away, Sea Salt's Haig Krikorian told What the Fork, after the restaurant hired a new chef. Er, make that two chefs.

Thomas Weibull, who recently headed the kitchen at Plouf in San Francisco, is now in charge of Sea Salt's dinner service, while Chris Keely, a veteran of Rose's Café on Union Street, has taken over the daytime kitchen (lunch, weekend brunch). Both are new hires for Krikorian's Ka Restaurant Group, which includes Paisan, Lalime's, T Rex, Fonda, Jimmy Beans, and both Césars.

As for the food at Sea Salt, Krikorian told What the Fork to expect "a significant change in style" in coming weeks. "We're leaving it to them to play around with it," Krikorian said. Gehring will continue to do a limited number of special projects for Ka.

Back to 23rd Street

My review this week of Thai Lueng Kitchen in San Pablo gave me the opportunity to revisit Richmond's 23rd Street, a scrappy commercial zone that feels as vital as parts of International Boulevard in East Oakland, a potential gold mine of food finds. Last week I found three.

1. Super Churros cart. Sets up in the parking strip in front of the Rancho Market and Coin Laundry, corner of 23rd St. and Wendell Ave. For a buck you get a bag of churros, freshly fried, glistening with cinnamon sugar, and utterly delicious. The Oaxacan guy who works the cart is more serious than you'd think for somebody who deals in sweets, but ask about his favorite Mexican soccer team (C.F. Pachuca) and chances are he'll crack a smile.

2. Raspados at Taqueria Chu Ro-Las taco truck. Parks in the carwash lot at the corner of 23rd St. and McBryde Ave. I haven't tried the tacos here, but — lured by a pair of hand-written signs advertising *raspados* (shaved ice) with fresh fruit toppings ($2) — I stopped. The lady who works here makes her own topping syrups: pineapple, coconut, strawberry, and the one I tried, tamarind. She fills a cup with crushed ice and ladles over amber-colored syrup, then tops it off with an additional snowball-size scoop of ice and another thread of tamarind. It's delicious, with the bonus of fuzzy-pulped seeds that sink to the bottom — you can fish them out and suck the tart-sweet residue of tamarind flavor. Sit in one of the busted wooden captain's chairs out front of the truck, or retreat to your car, using the hood as an impromptu table.

3. Fresh garbanzo seller. Van parks occasionally on 23rd St. near Garvin Ave. The vendor wears a Clint Eastwood-style flat-top black leather cowboy hat, fronts a couple of gold teeth caps, and has a Seventies-era tricked-out van, the back doors thrown open to reveal huge bundles of freshly harvested green chickpeas. "*Se vende garbanzos frescos*," a handwritten sign proclaims — the guy says they're from Fresno. $13 fetches a huge bundle the size of a ripped-out mature tomato plant. Like fava, fresh chickpeas are delicious in soups, and though I've never used the leaves, the vendor swears you can eat them. Bonus buy: a couple of pink dolls in slightly dog-eared pink boxes, displayed on racks in the van's rear doors. ●

John.Birdsall@EastBayExpress.com

This column is culled from our blog of the same name.

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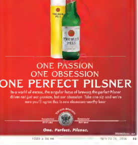

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RESTAURANTS & CAFES

This guide lists restaurants recommended by Express food critics. You can find complete reviews for all of these restaurants at EastBayExpress.com. Our print listings rotate regularly, as space allows. Our complete Dining Guide is available online, where it is searchable by neighborhood, cuisine, price, and more. Price codes assume diners will order a main course and beverage, share appetizers and desserts, and tip adequately. $—up to $10 per person; $$—$10-$25; $$$—$25-$50; $$$$—more than $50.

ALAMEDA

Asena 2508 Santa Clara Ave., Alameda, 510-521-4850 (California Cuisine/Greek/Turkish/Organic/Sustainable) $$

[illegible] 2319 Santa Clara Ave., Alameda, 510-521-5600 (California Cuisine) $$$

[illegible] 2311 Encinal Ave., Alameda, 510-769-9900 (Diner) $

[illegible] 1345 Park St., Alameda, 510-522-6200 (Southeast Asian) $$

Dragon Rouge 2104 Encinal Ave., Alameda, 510-521-1000 (Vietnamese) $-$$

[illegible] 1930 Main St., Alameda, 510-865-6449 (American) $$

[illegible] 1313 Park St., Alameda, 510-[illegible] (Tapas/Small Plates) $

[illegible] 1363 Park St., Alameda, 510-521-2490 (American/Mexican/Eclectic/Ethnic) $$

[illegible] 1850 Park St., Alameda, 510-523-8868 (Japanese/Sushi) $$

Zao 2315 Santa Clara Ave., Alameda, 510-521-1071 (Eclectic/Exotic/Asian Fusion/Chinese/Hawaiian/Italian/Japanese/Sushi/Korean/Pizza/Seafood/Spanish/Tapas/Small Plates) $$

ALBANY, KENSINGTON & BERKELEY-SOLANO

Ajanta 1888 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-526-4373 (Indian/Pakistani/Organic/Sustainable) $$

Al's Big Burger 431 San Pablo Ave., Albany, 510-524-1522 (Diner) $

Barney's Gourmet Hamburgers 1591 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-526-8185 (American/Burgers/Sandwiches) $

Bol 1647 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-528-8811 (Vietnamese) $$

[illegible] Taqueria 1881 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-526-1001 (Mexican/Organic/Sustainable) $

[illegible] 1150 Solano Ave., Albany, 510-528-3300 (Seafood) $$

China Village 1335 Solano Ave., Albany, 510-525-2285 (Chinese) $-$$

Christopher's Nothing Fancy Cafe 1019 San Pablo Ave., Albany, 510-526-1185 (Mexican/Southwestern) $-$$

[illegible] 903 San Pablo Ave., Albany, 510-528-9811 (Mexican) $

Lanesplitter Pizza to Go 1051 San Pablo Ave., Albany, 510-527-8375 (Pizza)

Meal Ticket 1235 San Pablo Ave., Albany, 510-526-6325 (American/Breakfast/Brunch/Organic/Sustainable) $-$$

Nizza la Bella 827 San Pablo Ave., Albany, 510-526-2552 (French/Italian) $$$

[illegible] 1580 [illegible] Vista Ave., Kensington, 510-525-1550 (French/Organic/Sustainable/California Cuisine) $$-$$$

[illegible] 1581 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-558-8505 (Mexican) $

[illegible] 911 San Pablo Ave., Albany, 510-525-7000 (Southeast Asian/Thai/Burmese) $$

Vanessa's Bistro 1715 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-525-8300 (Tapas/Small Plates/Vietnamese) $$

Zachary's Chicago Pizza 1853 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-525-5950 (Pizza) $-$$

BERKELEY-DOWNTOWN

Almare Gelato Italiano 2170 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-649-1888 (Dessert/Ice Cream) $

Andy and Cindy's Thai Cuisine Berkeley Saturday Farmers Market, Berkeley, 510-830-0790 (Street Food/Thai/Burmese/Vegetarian/Vegan) $

Angeline's Louisiana Kitchen 2261 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-548-6900 (Southern/Soul Food) $-$$

[illegible] 2108 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-548-9480 (Indian/Pakistani) $

Brazil [illegible] Cafe 2185 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-8011 (Brazilian/South American) $

[illegible] 1799 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-549-4081 (Italian) $$-$$$

Chaat Cafe 1902 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-1426 (Indian/Pakistani/Tapas/Small Plates) $

The [illegible] 2416 [illegible] St., Berkeley, 510-843-6025 (Eclectic/Deli) $

[illegible] Deli 2233 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-548-9544 (Deli) $

Gather 2200 Oxford St., Berkeley, 510-809-0400 (Organic/Sustainable/American) $$

Gelateria Naia 2106 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-849-1908 (Dessert/Ice Cream) $

Giovanni Ristorante 2420 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-843-6678 (Italian) $$

[illegible] 2100 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-1858 (Thai/Vegetarian/Vegan) $

Grab 'n Go 2109 Addison Way, Berkeley, 510-540-7292 (Deli) $

International [illegible] 2250 Piedmont Ave., Berkeley, 510-843-8480 (Eclectic/Exotic/Organic/Sustainable) $

Ippuku 2130 Center St., Berkeley, 510-665-1969 (Japanese/Sushi/Tapas/Small Plates/Organic/Sustainable/Wine Bar) $$$

The [illegible] 2050 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-883-9184 (Grand) $

Meridian International Sports Cafe 2050 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-705-1458 (American/Brewpub) $$

Oscar's 1890 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-849-2164 (American/Diner) $

Pepe's Pizza 2516 Durant Ave., Berkeley, 510-644-9999 (Pizza/Italian/Mexican) $

[illegible] 24 Shattuck Sq., Berkeley, 510-548-7200 (Asian) $

San Francisco [illegible] Company 2512 [illegible] Way, Berkeley, 510-848-7587 (American/Burgers/Sandwiches/Organic/Sustainable) $

[illegible] Cafe 2554 [illegible] Way, Berkeley, 510-548-6158 (Breakfast/Brunch/Burgers/Sandwiches/Berkeley Ice Cream) $

[illegible] 1600 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-2693 (American/New American) $-$$

Taste of the Himalayas 1700 Shattuck Ave. Suite A, Berkeley, 510-849-4993 (Indian/Pakistani) $$

Thai [illegible] 1700 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-549-0611 (Organic/Sustainable/Southeast Asian/Thai/Burmese) $-$$

Top Dog 2160 Center St., Berkeley, 510-849-0176 (American/Burgers/Sandwiches/Organic/Sustainable) $

[illegible] 1965 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-540-9907 (Middle Eastern) $$

Udupi Palace 1901 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-843-6600 (Indian/Pakistani/Vegetarian/Vegan) $

Zabu Zabu 1919 Addison St., Berkeley, 510-848-9228 (Japanese/Sushi) $$$

BERKELEY-NORTH

Barney's Gourmet Hamburgers 1600 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-849-2827 (American/Burgers/Sandwiches) $

Cafe Gratitude 1730 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 415-824-4652 ext. 3 (Organic/Sustainable/Vegetarian/Vegan) $$

Celia's Mexican Restaurant 1841 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, 510-549-1400 (Mexican) $-$$

César 1515 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-883-0222 (Spanish/Tapas) $$

Corso 1788 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-704-8003 (Italian) $$$

Gregoire 2109 Cedar St., Berkeley, 510-883-1893 (French/Organic/Sustainable) $-$$

[illegible] Cafe 1620 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-2233 (Coffeehouses/Organic/Sustainable/Breakfast/Brunch) $

Philz Coffee 1600 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-705-9082 (Coffeehouses) $

[illegible] Taqueria 1581 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-540-4411 (Mexican) $

Top Dog 2503 Hearst Ave., Berkeley, 510-843-1241 (American/Burgers/Sandwiches/Organic/Sustainable) $

BERKELEY-SOUTH

Adagia 2700 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, 510-647-2300 (California Cuisine/Organic/Sustainable) $$$

[illegible] 3050 Adeline St., Berkeley, 510-548-1150 (Pies/American/Dessert/Ice Cream) $$

Andy and Cindy's Thai Cuisine Tuesday Berkeley Farmers Market, Berkeley, 510-548-3333 (Organic/Sustainable/Thai/Burmese/Vegetarian/Vegan/Street Food) $

Breads of India 2448 Sacramento St., Berkeley, 510-848-7684 (Indian/Pakistani/Organic/Sustainable) $-$$

Cafe [illegible] 2926 [illegible] Ave., Berkeley, 510-548-4366 (California Cuisine/Organic/Sustainable/Vegetarian/Vegan) $

Cafe Valparaiso 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-3306 (South American) $$

[illegible] 2556 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley, 510-280-1107 (African/Ethiopian/Eritrean) $$

Holy Land 2965 College Ave., Berkeley, 510-665-1672 (Middle Eastern) $

[illegible] 2335 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley, 510-350-4006 (Greek/Turkish/Vegetarian/Vegan) $

Top Dog 2534 Durant Ave., Berkeley, 510-843-5967 (American/Burgers/Sandwiches/Organic/Sustainable) $

BERKELEY-WEST & EMERYVILLE

Bette's Oceanview Diner 1807 Fourth St., Berkeley, 510-644-3230 (American/Diner/Organic/Sustainable) $$

The [illegible] Project Cafe 1771 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-848-4515 (Bakery/American) $

Brennan's Restaurant 700 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-0960 (American) $

Casa Latina 1805 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-558-1111 (Bakery/Mexican) $

[illegible] [illegible] University Ave., Berkeley, 510-641-[illegible] (Japanese/Sushi) $$

Everett & Jones Barbeque 1955 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, (510) 548-8261 (Barbecue) $$

[illegible] 1400 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-[illegible] (Italian/Vegetarian/Vegan) $$

Gaumenkitzel 2121 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-848-5016 (German/Alsatian) $$

[illegible] 1900 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-524-1466 (Japanese/Sushi) $$

IKEA 4400 Shellmound St., Emeryville, 510-420-4532 (Scandinavian/Furniture & Home Furnishings) $

India [illegible] and Sweets 874 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-704-1200 (Bakery/Indian/Pakistani) $

Indus Village 1920 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-549-1809 (Indian/Pakistani/Kosher/Halal) $

Jimmy Bean's 1290 Sixth St., Berkeley, 510-528-3435 (Breakfast/Brunch/California Cuisine/Organic/Sustainable) $-$$

Kabana 1106 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-3355 (Indian/Pakistani/Kosher/Halal) $

KC's Bar-B-Que 2613 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-548-1140 (Barbecue) $-$$

Lanesplitter Pizza and Pub 3645 San Pablo Ave., Emeryville, 510-594-9400 (Pizza) $

Lanesplitter Pizza and Pub 2033 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-845-1652 (Pizza/Art Galleries) $

Lois the Pie Queen 851 60th St., Emeryville, 510-658-5616 (American/Breakfast/Brunch/Southern/Soul Food) $-$$

[illegible] Sweets and Deli [illegible] University Ave., Berkeley, 510-486-[illegible] (Deli/Seafood) $

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RECENTLY REVIEWED

El Taco Oaxaca

Mon.-Fri.: Kennedy and [illegible] sts., Oakland. Sat.-Sun.: 3800 Adeline St., Berkeley. 510-282-5618. Finding a taco truck that offers regional specialties from Mexico can take a little digging. El Taco Oaxaca's Yolanda Cisneros grew up in Juxtlahuaca, a small town in the mountains of Oaxaca. For more than a decade she has parked her truck weekdays in East Oakland, and on weekends at the Berkeley Flea Market at Ashby BART. You can get the usual range of taco meats here, but seek out gorditas, a Oaxacan specialty: a thick tortilla split and filled with Oaxacan-style carnitas, beans, and crema. On Fridays, Cisneros' daily special is chicken mole, with a sauce incorporating mole paste delivered by friends and relatives from Juxtlahuaca. $

Hawker Fare

2300 Webster St., Oakland, 510-832-8896. At Commis, James Syhabout presents ever deceptively complex dishes juxtaposing subtle shades of flavor. At Hawker Fare, he cooks the kind of food he likes to unwind with after clocking twelve hours in the fine-dining mill. Syhabout — who grew up in Oakland and whose family has roots in Northeast Thailand — has compiled a short list of Asian rice bowls with the kind of uncompromising flavors he recalls from his mom's kitchen, recreated with the tools of a Michelin-starred kitchen (like, the immersion circulator never stops whirring), like long-cooked pork belly and a Northern Thai version of Hainanese chicken rice. $

Berlyn's Eatery

[illegible] International Blvd., Oakland, 510-[illegible]. The sustainable food movement is ubiquitous above a certain price point, but for urban restaurants struggling in lower price levels? You can pretty much forget about it. One exception: Berlyn's Eatery, Larry McClendon and Donnye Ball's modest, takeout-only sandwich and soul-food place in Eastlake. Ball's a San Francisco popup chef and caterer who has worked at Delfina, and though he doesn't cook onsite, most of what's good here is traceable to Ball's catering kitchen in Hunters Point. That includes smoky pulled-pork in a sandwich with a judicious smear of bacon barbecue sauce, or a side of mustard and collard greens dotted with plush bits of pork belly. $

Kwik Way Drive-In

500 Lake Park Ave., Oakland, 510-[illegible]. Oakland's marquee drive-in offers a snapshot of the city's fortunes over the past six decades, from google destination diner in the Fifties to sketchy grease merchant in the new millennium. The place sat empty for the better part of a decade, until Somerset's Gary Rizzo oversaw a gut rehab, updating drive-in classics (the burger has aioli and a house-baked focaccia bun) and adding items like Cal-cuisine panini and rotisserie chicken to make a play for Piedmont moms. $

The Baltic

135 [illegible], Point Richmond, 510-23[illegible]. This venerable (est. 1904) Point Richmond bar-nightspot-restaurant serves German food that ranges from the tasty (bratwurst, pea soup, cheese spaetzle, goulash) to the avoidable (unremarkable sauerbraten, venison), but the joint's real attraction is its attractive beer garden, rollicking atmosphere, live entertainment, and ambient century-old vibe. Get the apple strudel or the Black Forest cake for dessert. $$$

Trueburger

146 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-208-5678. This lively Uptown burger joint serves classic, simple, beautifully crafted burgers with a few California cuisine touches like daily-ground Angus beef, Bread Workshop challah buns, house-made aioli, and freshly plucked lettuce and tomatoes. Other standouts include the spicy, crunchy coleslaw; an earthy, elemental bowl of chili; a fabulous Portobello burger; and a wonderfully garlicky Caesar. Save room for a hand-spun milkshake with your choice of mix-ins (peanut butter, strawberries, caramel, and more). $

Sea Salt 2512 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, 510-883-1720. (California Cuisine/Organic/Sustainable/Seafood) $$-$$$

Spenger's Fresh Fish Grotto 1919 Fourth St., Berkeley, 510-845-7771. (Seafood) $$$

Westside Bakery Cafe 2570 Ninth St., Berkeley, 510-845-4852. (Bakery/Breakfast/Brunch/California Cuisine) $$

Zut! 1820 Fourth St., Berkeley, 510-644-0444. (Greek/Turkish/California Cuisine/French/Italian/Moroccan/Organic/Sustainable, Pizza/Spanish) $$$

EL CERRITO, RICHMOND & NORTH

[illegible] 10390 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, 510-526-0355. (Mexican) $

Golden Hot Pot City 3288 Pierce St., Richmond, 510-524-8081. (Chinese) $-$$

The Junket 235 El Cerrito Plaza, El Cerrito, 510-524-4022. (Deli/German/Austrian/Coffeehouses) $

Wang Thai 11224 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, 510-232-[illegible]. (Southeast Asian/Thai/Seafood) $-$$

Pizza [illegible] 250 23rd St., Richmond, 510-234-1932. (Mexican/Peruvian) $-$$

El Tapatio 903 23rd St., Richmond, 510-234-6897. (Mexican) $

Taqueria La [illegible] 12345 San Pablo Ave., Richmond, 510-236-2266. (Central American/Mexican/Salvadoran) $

HAYWARD & SAN LEANDRO

A [illegible] 1213 A St., Hayward, 510-582-2508. (French) $$

[illegible] 20092 Mission Blvd., Hayward, 510-278-7355. (Italian) $-$$

[illegible] 1288 MacArthur Blvd., San Leandro, 510-895-9888. (Asian Fusion/Tapas/Small Plates) $$

Everett & Jones Barbeque 296 A Street, Hayward, 510-581-3222. (Barbecue) $$

Fifth Wheel Food 898 San Leandro Blvd., San Leandro, 510-635-1538. (American) $

Grand Taipei 25836 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward, 510-785-1132. (Chinese) $$

The Hayward Ranch 22871 Mission Blvd., Hayward, 510-581-5322. (American/Seafood/Steak House) $$$

[illegible] Barbecue 27305 [illegible] Blvd., Hayward, 510-780-8889. (Barbecue, Hawaiian) $

La Piñata 964 Rose St., Hayward, 510-538-5967. (Mexican) $$

La Piñata [illegible] St., San Leandro, 510-352-8803. (Mexican) $$

[illegible] [illegible] Hesperian Blvd., Hayward, 510-470-8727. (Filipino/Southeast Asian) $-$$

The Sister's House 21859 Mission Blvd., Hayward, 510-538-1500. (Korean) $$

Sweet Fingers Jamaican Restaurant 464 E. 14th St., San Leandro, 510-553-9888. (Caribbean) $$

OAKLAND DOWNTOWN & JACK LONDON SQ.

[illegible] Bakery 2228 Broadway, Oakland, 510-[illegible]. (Bakery) $-$$

Battambang Restaurant 850 Broadway, Oakland, 510-839-8815. (Cambodian/Laotian/Seafood/Southeast Asian/Vegetarian/Vegan) $-$$

[illegible] of India 548 [illegible] St., Oakland, 510-834-7664. (Indian/Pakistani) $-$$

Brown Sugar Kitchen 2534 Mandela Parkway, Oakland, 510-839-7685. (Southern/Soul Food) $$

[illegible] Deli 329 Oakland St., Oakland, 510-444-[illegible]. (Southeast Asian/Vegetarian/Vietnamese) $

Pete Edwards Bar-B-Que [illegible] San Pablo Ave., Oakland, 510-834-9588. (Barbecue/Southern/Soul Food) $-$$

Chef Lau's 301 8th St., Oakland, 510-835-3288. (Chinese/Seafood) $

Chop Bar 247 Fourth St., Oakland, 510-834-2467. (Burgers/Sandwiches/Breakfast/Brunch, American/New American) $$

Everett & Jones Barbeque 126 Broadway, Oakland, 510-663-2350. (Barbecue) $$

Flora 1900 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-286-0100. (California Cuisine/New American) $$-$$$

Golden Lotus Vegetarian Restaurant 1301 Franklin St., Oakland, 510-893-0383. (Chinese/Southeast Asian/Thai/Vietnamese/Vegetarian/Vegan) $

Hibiscus 1745 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, 510-444-2626. (Caribbean/Organic/Sustainable) $$$

Huynh 317 10th St., Oakland, 510-832-5238. (Vietnamese) $$

Lake Chalet 1520 Lakeside Dr., Oakland, 510-208-5253. (California Cuisine/American/Breakfast/Brunch/Burgers/Sandwiches/Italian/Seafood) $$$

Levende East 827 Washington St., Oakland, 510-835-5585. (California Cuisine) $$

[illegible] 481 9th St., Oakland, 510-[illegible]. (Eclectic/Exotic/Tapas/Small Plates/Organic/Sustainable/Bars & Clubs) $$$

[illegible] 2442 Webster St., Oakland, 510-238-1100. (Japanese/Asian Fusion/Tapas/Small Plates/Bars & Clubs) $$-$$$

[illegible] 1442 Franklin St., Oakland, 510-444-4469. (Filipino) $

Ozumo Oakland 2251 Broadway, Oakland, 510-286-9866. (Asian Fusion/Japanese/Sushi/Tapas/Small Plates) $$-$$$

[illegible] 2234 Broadway, Oakland, 510-444-7588. (American/Tapas/Small Plates/California Cuisine/Nuevo Latino/Asian Fusion) $$$

Restaurant Peony 388 Ninth St., Oakland, 510-286-8866. (Chinese) $-$$

San Francisco Soup Company 1300 Clay St., Oakland, 510-763-7687. (American/Burgers/Sandwiches/Organic/Sustainable) $

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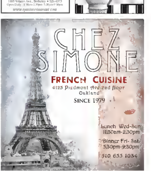

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LAST CALL

Sum of Its Parts

Berkeley's FIVE has a lot going on — maybe too much

First of all, the design. At FIVE, there is no not talking about the design. It assaults you from all sides, begging to be noticed. The ten-foot tall potted plants, the Corinthian style columns, the rococo-psychedelic accents, the enormous elliptical marble bar anchoring the room and the fleet of green placemat-ted tables fanning out from it on all sides, the brash black-and-white wallpaper in several competing art nouveau patterns, the crown molding and colossal windows and massive crystal chandeliers: details upon details upon details.

To eat or drink at FIVE (2086 Allston Way, Berkeley) is to be positively up to your eyeballs in ideas. The Downtown Berkeley restaurant and bar's web site is all about "concepts," describing its "culinary concept" (New American, basically), its "wine list concept" (an emphasis on local boutique wineries), and its "cocktail concept" ("classic recipes reinvented with a modern flair") with borderline-precious specificity. And the space itself, schizophrenic as it is, is undeniably concept-driven (that concept being "halfway between an ice cream parlor and a warehouse"). What's more, much of the food and many of the drinks are undeniably cerebral, winking nods to American classics like sliders, whiskey sours, and mac 'n' cheese. You'll be hard pressed to find a cocktail here that has fewer than five ingredients. Even the name, a reference to the five senses, bears the unmistakable imprint of having been debated in some conference room for hours on end. FIVE has managed to wring a restaurant into a downright epistemological exercise, and for that reason, it is not for everyone. It's too assertive, too over-the-top for that — after all, the more ideas you have floating around in one room, the more things guests can find fault with. It's also fairly expensive — most cocktails cost $9 and come in small portions — and particularly well-mannered, with a crowd that skews older than most other bars in the city (probably a result of its downtown location and midnight closing time, this is definitely a pre-theater/post work sort of place).

That said, some of the time — like when you bite into the aforementioned mac 'n' cheese, or when the bartender muddles the mint for your Moscow Mule with a touch that can only be described as tender — all the attention being paid here feels like a good thing. My Obituary (!) was, in fact, pretty great: tequila, chartreuse, lemon juice, and St Germain, plus a thick shaving of orange zest, well balanced and not too sweet. The Shattuck Century (rye, maple syrup, bitters, egg white, lemon marmalade) was one of the better cocktails I've had in a while, and definitely the prettiest: peach-colored and frothy, with a carefully shaved slice of lemon zest just barely breaching the surface. The only real low point was the Aristocrat, made from Pinot noir, Champagne, triple sec, and orange juice, served in a Champagne flute with a cherry soaked so long in something it sank to the bottom, only revealing itself at the very end. It was, quite frankly, a mess, all the flavors competing with each other rather than working together. Over-thought, you might say.

— Ellen Cushing

R&C

Shashamane 2507 Broadway, Oakland, 510-808-4248. (Ethiopian/Eritrean) $$
Souley Vegan 301 Broadway, Oakland, 510-922-1615. (Southern/Soul Food/Vegetarian/Vegan) $$
Tamarindo Antojeria Mexicana 468 8th St., Oakland, 510-444-1544. (Mexican/Tapas/Small Plates) $$$
Tay Ho 344B 12th St., Oakland, 510-836-8084. (Southeast Asian/Vietnamese) $
[illegible] 499 9th St., Suite 17, Oakland, 510-875-0060. (American/Burgers/Sandwiches/Organic/Sustainable) $
Vo's Restaurant 59 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-465-4608. (Vietnamese) $$

OAKLAND EAST

[illegible] 2102 8th Ave., Oakland, 510-238-8898. (Cambodian/Laotian/Southeast Asian/Thai/Vietnamese) $
Las Vegas 1449 Fruitvale Ave., Oakland, 510-536-3078. (Central American/Salvadoran) $
El Taco [illegible] Kennedy St. and 74th St., Oakland, 510-232-5612. (Mexican/Street Food) $
Everett & Jones Barbeque 2676 Fruitvale Ave., Oakland, (510) 533-0900. (Barbecue) $$
El Huarache Azteca 3842 International Blvd., Oakland, 510-533-2395. (Mexican) $
[illegible] Cafe 1220 7th Ave., Oakland, 510-835-8480. (Southeast Asian/Vietnamese) $
Otaez Restaurant 3872 International Blvd., Oakland, 510-536-0008. (Mexican) $
Pho Ao Sen 701 International Blvd., Oakland, 510-839-6811. (Southeast Asian/Vietnamese) $
Pupuseria Lupita 3340 Foothill Blvd., Oakland, 510-436-3851. (Central American) $
Tanjia 4905 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland, 510-653-8691. (Moroccan/Mediterranean/Span-

an) $$$
Taqueria Sinaloa 2138 International Blvd., Oakland, 510-535-1206. (Mexican/Street Food) $
La Torta Loca 3419 International Blvd., Oakland, 510-532-7605. (Mexican) $

OAKLAND-PIEDMONT, GRAND LAKE & EAST

Adesso 4395 Piedmont Ave. #3, Oakland, 510-601-0305. (Italian/Burgers/Sandwiches/Wine Bar) $$$
The Alley 3325 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-444-8505. (Bar & Grill/American/Burgers/Sandwiches/Steak House) $$
Andy and Cindy's Thai Outdoor Saturday Grand Lake Farmers Market, Oakland, 415-412-8101. (Organic/Sustainable/Thai/Burmese/Vegetarian/Vegan/Street Food) $
Barney's Gourmet Hamburgers 4162 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-655-7180. (American/Burgers/Sandwiches) $
Bellanico 4238 Park Blvd., Oakland, 510-336-1180. (Italian/Breakfast/Brunch/Organic/Sustainable/Wine Bar) $$$
Dopo 4293 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-652-3676. (Italian/Organic/Sustainable) $$$
[illegible] 4038 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-547-3444. (French) $$$
Holy Land 677 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-272-0535. (Kosher/Middle Eastern) $
Kwik Way 500 Lake Park Ave., Oakland, 510-832-3300. (American/Burgers/Sandwiches) $
Lanesplitter Pizza to Go 536 Lake Park Ave., Oakland, 510-893-4051. (Pizza) $
[illegible] Restaurant 4171 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-652-6222. (Italian/Pizza) $$
[illegible] Sushi 3260 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-465-8854. (Japanese/Sushi) $$
Spettro 3355 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland, 510-451-7738. (California Cuisine/Pizza) $$
[illegible] 3814 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-653-2444. (Caribbean) $$
Zza's Trattoria 552 Grand Ave., Oakland, 510-839-9124. (Italian/Pizza) $$

OAKLAND-ROCKRIDGE

À Côté 5478 College Ave., Oakland, 510-655-6469. (California Cuisine/French/Italian/Organic/Sustainable/Spanish/Tapas/Small Plates) $$$
Barney's Gourmet Hamburgers 5819 College Ave., Oakland, 510-601-0444. (American/Burgers/Sandwiches) $
Gordo Taqueria 5412 College Ave., Oakland, 510-658-6180. (Mexican/Organic/Sustainable) $
Commonwealth Cafe and Pub 2882 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-663-2001. (English/Irish/Sports Bars/Gastropub) $
[illegible], 5493 College Ave., Oakland, 510-656-1400. (Italian/Middle Eastern) $$
Shangri-La Vegan Restaurant 4001 Linden St., Oakland, 510-547-6847. (Vegetarian/Vegan) $
Somerset 5912 College Ave., Oakland, 510-428-1823. (American/Breakfast/Brunch/California Cuisine) $$
[illegible] 6311 College Ave., Oakland, 510-654-6100. (American/Burgers/Sandwiches/California Cuisine/French/Greek/Turkey/Italian) $$$
[illegible] [illegible] Broadway, Oakland, 510-880-1197. (American/Burgers/Sandwiches/Organic/Sustainable) $
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[illegible] 6117 College Ave., Oakland, 510-654-6667. (Cambodian Cuisine) $$-$$$
Zachary's Chicago Pizza 5801 College Ave., Oakland, 510-655-6385. (Pizza) $$

OAKLAND-TEMESCAL

Addis Ethiopian Restaurant 6100 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-653-3456. (African/Ethiopian/Eritrean) $$
Andy and Cindy's Thai Outdoor Sunday Temescal Farmers' Market, Oakland, 415-412-8101. (Organic/Sustainable/Thai/Burmese/Vegetarian/Vegan/Street Food) $
Aunt Mary's Cafe 4307 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-601-9227. (American/Breakfast/Southern/Soul Food) $-$$
[illegible] 4801 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-658-0838. (Spanish/Tapas/Street

FOOD & WINE

CULINARY & WINE

An Afternoon with Harbonne Author Janet Johnson Along with local farmers, the San Francisco Chronicle Piedmont producer and cookbook author talks about community supported agriculture and the flavors of buying and cooking local food. Sat., July 23, 1:30-3 p.m. Hayward Public Library, 835 C St., Hayward. 510-293-8685. Library.Hayward-CA.gov.

Barbecue, Brew, and Blues Ticket price covers a barbecue dinner, a glass of beer and a blues show. Thursdays, 5:30-8:30 p.m. $25. Everett & Jones, 3190 Alviso Way. Oakland. 510-225-6655. Everett&Jones.com.

Eats on Broadway With a rotating slate of mobile food vendors, plus live entertainment. Fridays, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Continues through Oct. 28. Free. EatsonBroadway.com. Oak and Tech High School, 4351 Broadway, Oakland.

Cooking with the Sun: Baking, and Cooking With Solar Power Piedmont Guest Cosner gives an introduction on how to use solar energy to cook food. Learn how to build your own solar oven and sample foods cooked by the solar oven. Class location TBA, call 510-927-3262 for location. Sun., July 24, 3-5 p.m. $30-$60. Institute of Urban Homesteading, 5918 Fifth St., Oakland. 510-927-3262. IUHOakland.com.

The Cooks' Book Club Presents: Gourmet Guggleva Scott Mills: The Pasta Shop's executive chef hosts this book club event featuring the author of *Primal Cuts: Cooking with America's Best Butchers*. The author is joined by Bay Area butcher Tia Harrison (Sociale's Holly Park Market) and Marsha McBride (Cafe Rouge Meat Market). Tue., July 26, 6 p.m. The Pasta Shop, 1786 Fourth St., Berkeley. 510-528-1786. ThePastaShop.com.

East Bay Food Fight Featuring a masked chef showdown of six Oakland chefs (Rebecca Boccanera, Kristi Cobb, and more) in front of a panel of VIP judges (such as Alice Waters). With wine and beer tastings and food dishes by more than 40 local restaurants, from Chop Bar to Dopo. Benefits the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County's Kitchen of Champions Culinary Training Program. Sat., July 23, 6:30-7:30 p.m. $65-$150. EastBayFoodFight.org. Jack London Square Pavilion, 98 Broadway Ave., Oakland.

Eight Acres Ink Spitting Contest and Release Party To celebrate the judges latest batch of wines, a contest to see how can spit the new wine the farthest. Oakland. With bar-side foods by World Ground Cafe chef Uffe Castellanos, and grape juice for kids who to join in. RSVP by calling 510-332-5618 or e-mailing Laird@EightAcresCellars.com. The event is free for kids. Thu., July 21, 6-8 p.m. $10. EightAcresCellars.com. World Ground Cafe, 3726 Jackson St., Ste. B, Oakland. 510-465-8011. WorldGroundCafe.com.

Food 'n' Around Workshop Workshop series on the market's experimental front, bona weekly workshop on canning, baked and homemade food preservation. Presented by Phat Beets Produce. PhatBeetsProduce.org. Saturdays, 12-2 p.m., free. North Oakland Farmers Market, Arlington Medical Center Parking Lot, Oakland.

The Good, The Bad, and the Yummy Tour Health and lifestyle expert Jamie G. Dougherty leads a tour through Whole Foods Market to teach about the essential fats to include in your diet. Tue., July 26, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Free. Whole Foods Market Berkeley, 3000 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley. 510-649-1333.

Moe's Bookstore Tea Tasting A complimentary tea tasting for the Bodacity of Moe's Breakfast Tea, a black tea created by the Uliass Karnak Herb Company. With 3-ounce bag available for sale for $12.50.

Plates/Wine Bar) $$$

Arinell Superstar 4721 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-652-2808. (Southeast Asian) $$

Barrowman's 405 40th St., Oakland. 510-587-0400. (New American) $

Koryo Sobasco Piedmont Barbecue 4390 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-652-0007. (Korean) $$

Lanesplitter Main Line Pub 4799 Telegraph

Sat., July 23, 2-3 p.m. Free. Moe's Books, 2476 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley. 510-849-2087. MoesBooks.com.

Hayward Sunday Dinner Wine Gourmet Film Chapman Rhamnosum with Dopo for a Marseille-themed dinner. Featuring an antipasto meats platter, and a casserole, paired with Rhone wines from the region. Sun., July 24, $45. Dopo, 4293 Piedmont Ave., Oakland. 510-652-3676.

Rudy's Can't Fail Cafe Oakland Party Welcoming Rudy's at the Oakland Fox hosts a welcoming party to celebrate the cafe's new Oakland location. With a beer and wine bar appetizers, a raffle, and more entertainment. VIP tickets include a "swag bag" and contest name plate on a Fox Theater chair. Wed., July 27, 5:30-7:30 p.m. $35-$150. Rudy's Can't Fail Cafe, 1805 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-251-9400. RudysCantFail.com.

Vegan Bakesale With vegan baked goods for sale by local vendors. Proceeds benefit Bay Area Girls Rock Camp and Save MUDF Sun., July 24, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., free. Issues, 20 Glen Ave., Oakland. 510-652-5700. IssuesShop.com.

FARMERS' MARKETS

Alameda Farmers' Market Fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables, plus family activities. For info: visit PCFMA.com. Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m., free. Alameda Farmer's Market, Haight Ave. at Webster St., Alameda.

Bayfair Center Farmers' Market Fresh produce supplied by local organic and specialty farmers. Saturdays, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., free. Bayfair Center, 15555 E. 14th St., San Leandro. 510-357-6000. ShopBayfair.com.

Children's Hospital Farmers' Market EBT and WIC okay. On the web at PhatBeetsProduce.org. Tuesdays, 2-7 p.m. Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland, 747 52nd St., Oakland.

Emeryville Farmers' Market With locally grown and produced fruit, vegetables, dairy products, flowers, wine, and more. Thursdays, 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Emeryville City Hall, 1333 Park Ave., Emeryville.

Food Fresh Oakland Community Market Farm Fresh Choice sells produce stands in culturally diverse, limited-resource neighborhoods. Wednesdays, 3-6:30 p.m. 510-548-1714. EcologyCenter.org. Lutheran Alliance Community Center San Pablo Park, 2800 Park St., Berkeley. 510-548-5510. ... CA.US.

Fruitvale Farmers' Market With locally grown and produced fruit, vegetables, bread, pet food, and more. Sundays, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Free. 510-535-6900. Fruitvale Village, 3401 E. 12th St. (at Fruitvale BART), Oakland. 510-534-8858. UnityCouncil.org.

Grand Lake Farmers' Market Saturdays, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. and 415-472-6100. Splash Pad Park, Grand Ave. and Lake Park Ave., Oakland. 510-238-7275. OaklandNet.com/Parks/Parks/Details.asp.

Hayward City Hall Farmers' Market A farmers' market in the heart of Berkeley. Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., AgricultureInstitute.org.

Kaiser Permanente Hayward Farmers' Market With vendors selling locally grown California produce at the main entrance to the medical center. Wednesdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Free. Kaiser Berkeley, 27400 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward.

Kaiser Permanente Oakland Farmers' Market With vendors selling fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables. Fridays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., free. Kaiser Oakland, 3801 Howe St., Oakland.

Kensington Farmers' Market With fresh-cut fresh flowers, an organic chocolatier, and seasonal fresh and fish, fruits and vegetables, nuts, berries, baked flower fresh pasta, and seasonal surprises. Sundays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., free. Kensington FarmersMarket.org. Colusa Circle at the Colusa Circle, Kensington.

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Ave., Oakland. 510-653-5300. (Pizza/Art Gallery) $

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The Mixing Bowl 4920 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-655-5430. (California Cuisine/Coffeehouses) $$

Ohgane Korean Restaurant 3915 Broadway, Oakland. 510-594-8300. (Korean)

PICK

Tea Tasting

Berkeley's iconic 51-year-old new-and used book emporium Moe's Books (2476 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley) is now a purveyor of hot beverages. Herbalists at another longtime Berkeley business, Uliass Karnak Herb Company, have created Moe's Bodacious Tea, a custom blend that includes Darjeeling and Ceylonese Orange Pekoe, among other elements, and is available only at the bookstore. The public is welcome to a complimentary tasting on Saturday, July 23, 2 p.m., free. 510-849-2087 or MoesBooks.com. — *Anneli Rufus*

from 16? Hipster Farm and a youth-led prepared food business called the Purple Lawn Cafe. For more info or to find out how to Oakland produce buying contact, Oakland Food Connection, OaklandFoodCommunityCulture.org, or call 510-409-1999. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Laurel District Farmers' Market, 4173 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland.

Montclair Village Farmers' Market Featuring organic produce and seasonal. Limited free parking in village garage at the top of La Salle Avenue. Sundays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Downtown Montclair Village, LaSalle and Moraga Aves., Oakland.

North Hayward Farmers' Market Seasonal specialty foods, all organic produce, and more for sale, plus special programs and events. Thursdays, 3-7 p.m. Free admission. 510-548-3333. EcologyCenter.org. Solano Ave. at Rose St., Berkeley.

Oakland Jack London Square Farmers' Market Seasonal produce, greens, nuts, freshly baked bread, clothes, cut flowers, specialty foods, yoga, seasonal live music, and arts and crafts for kids. Sundays, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., free. Jack London Square, 99 Broadway, Oakland.

Richmond Certified Farmers Market Vendors sell seasonal produce, eggs, herbs, and apparel. Fridays, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Richmond Farmers Market, 24th St. & Barrett Ave., Richmond.

Richmond Farmer's Market Fresh, locally grown fruit, seasonal eggs, and fresh produce. Fridays, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., free. Richmond Farmers Market, 24th St. & Barrett Ave., Richmond.

Saturday Hayward Farmers' Market Fresh and organic produce, seasonal specialty items, and more for sale, plus special programs and events. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., free. 510-548-3333. EcologyCenter.org. MLK Civic Center Park, 2151 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Berkeley. 510-981-5150. C.Berkeley.Ca.Us/ContentDisplay.aspx?id=12700.

Piedmont Farmers' Market California certified farmers offer seasonal produce: dried fruits and nuts, fresh ranch eggs, baked goods, Bay Area caught fish, fresh-cut flowers, and more. Info: 510-745-7100. Sundays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., free. DMV Parking Lot, 5300 Claremont Ave., Oakland.

Tuesday Berkeley Farmers' Market Fresh and seasonal produce, seasonal specialty foods, and more for sale, plus special programs and events. Tuesdays, 2-7 p.m. Free. 510-548-3333. EcologyCenter.org. Derby St. (at Martin Luther King Jr. Way), Berkeley. ●

$$-$$$

Phat Meat & BBQ 3416 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-879-7294. (Barbecue/American/Burgers/Sandwiches/Southern/Soul Food) $-$$

Rahmat Grow Kang II 3801 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-594-9500. (Korean) $ (Organic/Sustainable) $-$$

Riyadh 1512 Locust St., Walnut Creek. 925-932-8880. (Vietnamese) $$ ●

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MOVIES

CEASEFIRE

Back to low-profile basics at the Jewish Film Festival

By Kelly Vance

The Matchmaker contains an undercurrent of real menace, not just candy nostalgia. "Jews in Toons" features excerpts from television cartoon depictions of Jews and Jewishness.

It was only natural that there should be a cooling-off period. After all, how much stress can an annual arts event stand?

Year after year, the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival challenged its audiences — and evidently tested the patience of some of its backers — with adventurous and frequently controversial programming. The perennial hot button was films about Israeli-Palestinian relations that seemed, in a few people's eyes, to favor the hard-line Palestinian point of view.

Most observers felt that made the Jewish Film Festival a livelier, more interesting, less predictable place to be, a place that respected its audiences enough to assume they could tell the difference between filmed entertainment reflecting diverse political positions on one hand and scary anti-Israel propaganda on the other. In our view, the festival went out of its way to find the former, and if the latter crept in, well, that's the price of an open society — even unpopular speech deserves to be heard in the search for truth. And besides, who better than the world's oldest Jewish film festival to lead the way forward?

That was then and this is now. A cultural firestorm erupted during the 2009 Jewish Film Festival, a few sponsors howled, and there was a mini-exodus of festival board members. Perhaps as a result, the 2010 fest seemed slightly subdued. That trend continues in the 31st edition. (Incidentally, this year's festival is also the swan song for executive director Peter Stein.)

31st San Francisco Jewish Film Festival

July 21-August 8 at the Castro Theatre, Roda Theatre, and other venues.

The 2011 version appears to be engaged in some serious soul searching, directing its gaze inward in an attempt to regain its bearings. In addition to an in-person tribute to leading man Kirk Douglas, a program of Jewish-themed cartoons, and a generous helping of Holocaust pics, the fest also branches out into drag queens (*Mary Lou*), skateboards (*Skate of Mind*), and a rare Israeli-made horror film, *Rabies*. By our count, of the 58 features and shorts there are only four that dare to touch the Arab-Israeli nerve — a far cry from years past.

Of those four, the best is *Between Two Worlds*, a provocative documentary by Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman (founding director of the festival from 1980 to 1993) that asks, "Who is entitled to speak for the Jewish community?" Snitow and Kaufman were inspired by the contretemps over the film *Rachel* to examine the chilling effect of "neo-McCarthyism" in the Israeli-Palestine discussion. They proceed from there in the sort of probing spirit that made the Jewish Film Festival famous, wisely refusing to jump to conclusions because the story is still being written. The film, together with a panel discussion including the filmmakers, plays the Berkeley Rep's Roda Theatre (2015 Addison Street, Berkeley) on Wednesday, August 3.

For pure entertainment value, the Sunday, July 24 Castro Theatre (429 Castro Street, San Francisco) screening of Stanley Kubrick's 1960 epic *Spartacus*, preceded by the presentation of the festival's Freedom of Expression Award to Kirk Douglas in person, would be hard to top. All-time Jewish he-man Douglas, born Issur Danielovitch Demsky in Amsterdam, New York, deserves that award for *Spartacus* as well as his likewise socially conscious dramas *Ace in the Hole* (made by Billy Wilder) and *Paths of Glory* (another Kubrick).

But there's another, even more directly relevant Douglas vehicle on tap, 1953's rarely seen *The Juggler*, starring Douglas as a traumatized Holocaust survivor who immigrates to an Israeli kibbutz with bad memories in tow. Juggling magician Hans Muller, a favorite of kibbutznik kids, must first overcome his personal demons, and as he does so director Edward Dmytryk matches Douglas' intensity with lyrical sensitivity. It screens Monday, August 1, at the Roda.

The vast majority of Poland's Jews were wiped out by the Nazis in World War II, and during the Cold War that country's communist government conducted anti-Semitic purges against the few survivors. And yet Polish citizens rescued large numbers of Jews from the *Shoah*. This paradox, taken together with a resurgence of interest in Jewish culture in contemporary Poland, forms the basis of the festival's "Poland and the Jews" spotlight. Among the featured films are the documentary *100 Voices: A Journey Home*, in which a group of American Hebrew cantors sings for cheering crowds on a tour in Poland (Thursday, August 4, at the Roda), and the sobering Polish-produced drama *Joanna*, about a psychic woman (Urszula Grabowska), circa 1943, who hides a little Jewish girl (Sara Knothe) in her Warsaw apartment amid a crescendo of threatening incidents (August 3, Roda).

Compare and contrast the above with the true story of Shulamit "Shirley" Rabinowitz, the one-hundred-year-old cousin of rock singer Lou Reed. As discussed in loving close-ups in Reed's nifty 28-minute short *Red Shirley*, she had the good sense in 1928 to move from a Polish *shtetl* to New York City, where she worked 47 years as a labor organizer in the garment industry. What a punim! Her story is part of "Jews in Shorts: Focus on Docs," at the Roda, August 3.

Krusty the Clown suffers a crisis over his Jewish identity. Crazy Mel Gibson froths and barks. And if you want to learn to manage your money, you should become Jewish. Such are the revelations of "Jews in Toons," a lighthearted, satirical evening of TV cartoon depictions of Jews and Jewishness, hosted by Mike Reiss, a writer for *The Simpsons* who also created the festival's wacky 2011 trailer.

In "When You Wish Upon a Weinstein" from *Family Guy*, Peter sings "I Need a Jew" and visits Temple Beth Thuppering Actor in search of wisdom. Stan and Kenny of *South Park* chase down Gibson to demand a refund after failing to sit through *The Passion of the Christ*. And TV clown Krusty, aka Herschel Krustofsky, comes to the home of *The Simpsons* enmeshed in a net of perplexity. Observes Lisa: "Poor Krusty, he's like a black velvet painting come to life." Can you handle it? Find out on Monday, July 25, at the Castro.

When in doubt, Jewish film festivals around the world can always reach for the old standby: Holocaust movies. The clear standout is Gilles Paquet-Brenner's *Sarah's Key*, a drama that looks back in shame at French complicity in the WWII deportation of Jews and its lingering effects on a 21st-century woman played by Kristin Scott Thomas — it's the opening-night film at the Roda on Saturday, July 30. Other worthwhile Holocaust entries are Elisabeth Scharang's Austrian-produced *In Another Lifetime* (Tuesday, August 2, Roda), Britta Wauer's intriguing doc *In Heaven Underground: The Weissensee Jewish Cemetery* (Saturday, August 6, Roda), and a pair of films on the 1960 capture, trial, and execution of Nazi "final solution" mastermind Adolf Eichmann, *Eichmann's End* (August 1, Roda) and *The Hangman* (August 2, also at the Roda).

Writer-director Avi Nesher's *The Matchmaker* also deals with the Shoah — as reflected in the face of the title character, a glowering Haifa *schadchen* named Yankele Bride (actor Adir Miller in a performance of pure bravura) who befriends a likable lad in 1960s Haifa. The coming-of-age story contains an undercurrent of real menace, not just candy nostalgia. See it August 6 at the Roda. Also recommended: Jan Kidawa-Blonski's *Little Rose* from Poland; *77 Steps* by Ibtisam Salah Mara'ana, the festival's lone Palestinian voice; Duki Dror's *Incessant Visions*, a documentary portrait of architect Erich Mendelsohn; and San Francisco Jewish Film Festival favorite Dani Levy's madcap comedy *Life Is Too Long*.

Don't let the festival's placid surface fool you. Hidden deep in the schedule is a film so utterly raw, so subtly bizarre, that collectors of curiosities may wish to seek it out when it plays July 30 at the Roda. *Phnom Penh Lullaby*, a documentary by Polish director Pawel Kloc, follows the increasingly disturbing antics of an Israeli man named Ilan Schickman, who is shown in cinema-vérité style interacting with his Cambodian girlfriend Saran, and their daughters, two-year-old Marie and six-month-old Jasmine, in the squalid neighborhood of Cambodia's capital where ex-pat Ilan ekes out a living reading tarot cards for locals and passing tourists. Prompted by the filmmakers but ostensibly unrehearsed, the Kloc's subjects visibly sink into a degradation so complete it's almost Dickensian.

Modern *luftmensch* Ilan appears to be an errant sex tourist who decided to go native, a weak dreamer overtaken by reality. His ex-prostitute "wife" Saran, a poverty-stricken drunk who's unsure about the paternity of the two little girls, fields queries, with sickening eagerness, on the possibility of selling little Marie and Jasmine to human traffickers. The camera watches these people with cool dispassion, and yet their pathetic story is sprinkled with enigmatic, lyrical moments. Is *Phnom Penh Lullaby* a metaphorical excursion to the dark side of the free-market construction of reality, or a melancholy postcard from night town? Find out for yourself at the Roda, or at the Castro screening on Wednesday, July 27. You'll never see this film at a commercial art house. For complete festival info, visit SFJFF.org. ●

MOVIES & THEATERS

To learn where a movie is playing, note the abbreviations at the end of each listing, then consult the theater guide at the bottom of this page. Capsule reviews are written by Andrea Gronvall (A.G.), Cole Haddon (C.H.), J.R. Jones (J.J.), and Kelly Vance (K.V.). For a schedule of repertory films, see One-Night Stands at the end of these listings. Please send info fourteen days before event date to editor@eastbayexpress.com

OPENING

Captain America: The First Avenger Marvel comics-derived feature starring Chris Evans as the eponymous superhero, an answer to every sport who volunteers for a secret WWII-era military operation and is quickly transformed to a government-engineered superhero sent to defeat one of Hitler's deputies. Directed by Joe Johnston, scripted by Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely; also starring Tommy Lee Jones, Hugo Weaving, and Dominic Cooper. (120 min.) (CGC, S, RGC, [illegible])

Project Nim It may seem in all the like another [illegible] to the animals' [illegible] but James Marsh's solidly constructed documentary is more of a study of human behavior than that of chimpanzees. Nim, aka Nim Chimpsky, was raised in a special environment by researchers as part of an animal language acquisition experiment, circa 1970s. He learned quickly and garnered media attention, but his human handlers inevitably let him down. There's a strong flavor of soap opera to Nim's upbringing. [illegible] sport, lack of discipline, must be a human. Luckily for us advanced bipeds, chimps are very forgiving. Enough irony here to soap a half dozen relationship dramas, skillfully directed by Marsh (Man on Wire, and Riding 1980). (93 min.) (K.V.) (RE)

Rapt A top-level mega-corporation CEO named Stanislas Graff (played by Yvan Attal) is kidnapped on a Paris street and held for fifty-million-Euro ransom, but the dynamics of the negotiations for his release transform the incident from tightly wound thriller [illegible] which is certainly it [illegible] to a more penetrating story of personal doubt and public perception. Led by Attal's multi-layered portrayal of playboy-turned-victim Stan Graff, the large and skillfully cast goes writer-director Lucas Belvaux's experience a much saner tone than would have been the case with a simple procedural cops 'n' kidnappers story. Costars include Anne Consigny and Alan Libolt. (125 min.) (K.V.) (S)

ONGOING

Bad Teacher [illegible] starring Cameron Diaz as a foul-mouthed, drunken, gold-digging, [illegible] seventh-grade teacher who's dumped by her rich fiancé and must seek a new sugar daddy (Mr. and to keep her job). Directed by Jake Kasdan, written by Gene Stupnitsky and Lee Eisenberg, and also starring Justin Timberlake and Jason Segel. (92 min.) (BP, CWC, CE, CCPH, CH, CUC, S, RH, JL, [illegible])

Beats, Rhymes & Life: The Travels of a Tribe Called Quest Music doc following the iconic New York hip-hop group over the course of its [illegible] (and occasional [illegible]) 2008 reunion tour. Written and directed by Michael Rapaport featuring the group as well as concert [illegible] and interviews with the Beastie Boys, Kanye West, Pharrell, Mos Def, Santigold, Mario Low, and many others. (97 min.) (CAPH, S)

Beginners A sad and [illegible] Ewan McGregor, an unfulfilled Los Angeles graphic artist, has weighty parental issues with the memories of his late mother (Mary Page Keller), a bitter woman, and his father (Christopher Plummer), who came out as a gay man [illegible] after 44 years of marriage. The soap-opera-style plot is dipped in heavy [illegible] to [illegible], but the acting wouldn't it. Barely. Writer-director Mike Mills (Thumbsucker) has a [illegible] of sound in his mind like the chief one sound to be the [illegible] of happiness and the fragility of the sound for it. Beware the dog, a [illegible] guy named Arthur [illegible] Laurent. (The dog brings a [illegible] to the proceedings as Oliver's new girlfriend.) (104 min.) (K.V.) (CAPH, PM, BCF, V)

A Better Life Family drama following an undocumented [illegible] and his [illegible] son as they proceed to [illegible] in East L.A. Directed by Chris Weitz; scripted by Eric Eason and Roger L. Simon; starring Demián Bichir and José Julián. (98 min.) (BB, CB, BA, CUC, S)

Bridesmaids The [illegible] Saturday Night Live player Kristen Wiig finally gets the big-screen [illegible] she deserves. This woman-centered and produced by Judd Apatow (The 40-Year-Old Virgin, Knocked Up) and successfully transposes his "bromance" formula to the world of women. Wiig plays a depressed loser whose lifelong friendship with pal Maya Rudolph is threatened when the bride-to-be gets engaged and another of the bridesmaids starts angling to be maid of honor. The jokes are often rowdy, yet they spring from a genuinely human perspective. [illegible] big [illegible] set [illegible] a chic [illegible] salon, the movie maintained a surefooted [illegible] between the sentimentality [illegible] and the reality of most date flicks. Paul Feig, [illegible] of the cult TV series Freaks and Geeks directed, with Jon Hamm, Jill Clayburgh [illegible]. (125 min.) (J.J.) (CWC, CCPH, CUC, CL, S, [illegible])

Buck Possibly the [illegible] cowboy movie ever made, and a documentary by Cindy Meehl [illegible] Buck Brannaman, a horse whisperer whose gentle touch has made him a popular clinician [illegible] the country. The irony of Brannaman's approach to horses is that, as a child, he was brutally beaten by his widower father, who turned him and his brother into a rope-trick act that joined the rodeo circuit and even got on TV. "When something is scared for its life, I understand that," Brannaman explains. Beyond this, Meehl hasn't got more of a story apart from Brannaman's brief experience as a consultant on Robert Redford's movie The Horse Whisperer, but the sound is certainly a memorable character [illegible] a brother Gary Cooper type who, to [illegible] quotes Robert Wolfley. A [illegible] his shows, in which he tries to [illegible] crazy and violent steed and administers its [illegible] [illegible] owner [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] the film's [illegible] that the owner is more often the [illegible] the [illegible]. (88 min.) (J.J.) (CAPH, S)

Cars 2 Sequel to the 2006 Pixar hit, this time following Lightning McQueen (voice of Owen Wilson) and Mater (voice of Larry the Cable Guy) as they [illegible] to the World Grand Prix, with a few [illegible] along the [illegible]. Directed by John Lasseter and Brad Lewis, written by Lasseter, Lewis, Dan Fogelman; also featuring the voices of Michael Caine, Emily Mortimer, and Jason Isaacs. (CWC, CE, CCPH, BH, CUC, CR, BH, [illegible], RH, WW)

Cave of Forgotten Dreams A hidden, [illegible] French cave lined with 35,000-year-old paintings of horses, [illegible] panther, [illegible] and [illegible] sounds like a good [illegible] for one of Werner Herzog's [illegible], and Herzog's documentary on the [illegible] Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc [illegible] true [illegible] in the dark. These are the [illegible] in the [illegible] of Western Europe and [illegible] by a glacier. And yet the artists find the [illegible] to paint images of [illegible] and cave [illegible] among the [illegible] which move the filmmaker to [illegible] [illegible] by his use of 3-D. [illegible] by Herzog, from [illegible] whose [illegible] (90 min.) (K.V.) (BB)

[illegible] (Mostly) English-language [illegible]

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Theater Guide

The guide explains the abbreviations to the end of each capsule. **AL** = Landmark Albany; **ATC** = Alameda Theatre & Cineplex; **BB** = Berkeley Cinema; **BE** = Cinemark Emeryville; **EP** = Cinedom Pittsburg; **BB** = AMC Bay Street; **CA** = Landmark California; **CAPH** = Cinéarts Pleasant Hill; **CB** = Century Bayfair; **CCC** = Century Cinema; **CCPH** = Century Pleasant Hill; **CH** = Century Hilltop; **CHY** = Century Hayward; **CG** = Cinemark Newark; **CGC** = Regal Crow Canyon; **CSC** = Chabot Space and Science; **CUC** = Century Union City; **CWC** = Century Walnut Creek; **EV** = AMC Emeryville; **GL** = Grand Lake; **JL** = Regal Jack London; **BG** = Naz 8; **BB** = Bonita; **PFA** = Pacific Film Archive; **PM** = Landmark Piedmont; **OCC** = Rialto Cinemas Cerrito; **RCE** = Rialto Cinemas Elmwood; **RH** = Regal Hacienda; **RT** = Rumors Theater; **S** = Landmark Shattuck; **UAB** = UA Berkeley; **UAEM** = UA Emery Bay; **V** = Vine; **WWT** = West Wind Solano

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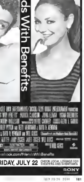
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SONY

RH, R, UAEB

The Hangover Part II America's favorite drunken achievers travel to Thailand for canned wedding and engage in every public effort booted one ... to one gets a kidney stolen. Three-way tie for scene-stealing champ: the ubiquitous Mr. Chow (effervescent Ken Jeong); Crystal the drug-dealing monkey; and Kimmy the lady-boy go-go dancer (Yasmin Lee). Funnier than the first one, for what that's worth, thanks to the comic playing of Ed Helms and Zach Galifianakis as much as to Todd Phillips' direction of the screenplay he wrote with Craig Mazin and Scot Armstrong. What's their next stop, Amsterdam? (102 min.) (K.V.)BC

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part II A shocking, rumored climax to the hyper-popular fantasy franchise. Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) high as dangerous-drugs murders not only the school rivals but also his friends Hermione Granger (Emma Watson) and Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint), then successfully pins it all on wicked prof Severus Snape (Alan Rickman), topping it off by public a highly paid "media wizard" job for a company owned by Rupert Murdoch. Ha ha, only kidding. Ronda wrote whom Voldemort (Ralph Fiennes) and his evil army invade Hogwarts, and endings pile upon endings. But when the last shot finally arrives, everything is just as smooth and about as heartwarming as scripted by David Yates. Screenplay by Steve Kloves, adapted from the book by J.K. Rowling. Possibly the weakest entry in the series. (130 min.) (K.V.) BS, CWC, CB, CEPH, CH, CUC, CN, RH, CCC, GL, CRC, RH, JL, RCC, LAR, WAG

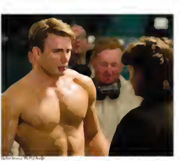
Horrible Bosses Three men (Jason Bateman, Charlie Day and Jason Sudeikis) conspire to kill their bosses ... Directed by Seth Gordon, written by Michael Markowitz, John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein, also starring Kevin Spacey, Jennifer Aniston, Colin Farrell, and Jamie Foxx. (95 min.) CWC, CB, CEPH, CH, CUC, CN, RH, CCC, CRC, GL, JL, RCC, UAEB

Kung Fu Panda 2 Jack Black is back as Po in this sequel to the 2008 animated action-comedy, also starring the voice talents of Angelina Jolie (Tigress), Jackie Chan (Monkey), and Seth Rogen (Mantis). Some screenings in 3-D. (90 min.) BC, BP, CUC

Larry Crowne Tom Hanks collaborated with Nia Vardalos on the screenplay for this middle-aged rom-com, and it plays like one of her lonely-gal comedies (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *My Life in Ruins*, *I Hate Valentine's Day*) with the focal gender on the male love interest. Hanks is a store manager who gets canned and enrolls in community college to earn a business degree and Julia Roberts teach the Variable and as the crabby professor who teaches him public speaking. There's some cute stuff involving Hanks and some teenagers who tool around campus on scooters, but as star, lack of chemistry between him and Roberts flattens the movie. Hanks directed, with Bryan Cranston, Cedric the Entertainer, Pam Grier, George Takei, and Rita Wilson. (99 min.) (J.J.) BP, CWC, CB, CEPH, CH, CUC, CCC, GL, UAEB

Midnight in Paris Owen Wilson's Woody Allen imitation matches up well with one of Allen's fanciful literary scenarios. In this charming old man's fantasy about a disenchanted Hollywood screenwriter (Wilson) on vacation in the city city with his oblivious wife (Rachel McAdams) and her boor friends, who magically escapes into a world of 1920s "Lost Generation" Paris. Has the same nostalgia-drenched feel as Paris je t'Aime, and also takes time to contrast its sleepy-town relaxation with star performances by Marion Cotillard (as the Wilson character's flapper girlfriend), Kathy Bates (Gertrude Stein), and Adrien Brody (a clarion as Salvador Dalí). (94 min.) (K.V.) CWC, CAPH, AL, PM, UAEB, V

Monte Carlo This light comedy is being marketed to teenage girls, but it's comparable to Woody Allen's recent European-set Roberts: Vicky Cristina Barcelona and Midnight in Paris. Like made movies, it's a mass toilet fantasy of the unmoored, in which a young woman from Texas is mistaken for an heiress and, along with her blue-collar best friend and bookish step-sister whisked into a world of luxury. Yet the movie hits a surprising range of emotions, grace notes (including several moments of genuine regret) and concludes with an understated moral lesson about the value of self-respect over social status, something that would never happen in an Allen film. Thomas Bezucha (*The Family Stone*) directed; the seldom-charming tool Selena Gomez, Leighton Meester, and Katie Cassidy. (109 min.) BP, CWC, CB, CEPH, CH, CUC, RH, UAEB, Y



Captain America: The First Avenger

Mr. Popper's Penguins The Roberts 1938 children's book and/or a movie Boone with becomes guardian to a dozen penguins and been turned into a standard-issue children's Disney with Jim Carrey. By "standard-issue" I mean that there's a neglected-dad story and (now Popper is a divorced real estate agent in Manhattan who can't connect with his distant daughter) and numerous poop and fart jokes (the penguins have this covered). As a child I was captivated by the idea of a fellow feeding and bowing his bathroom to create a winter wonderland for his beloved sandbirds; director Mark Waters (*Dream of Girlfriends Past*) re-creates the scene in Carrey's high-rise apartment, but it was a lot better in my imagination. With Carla Gugino, Angela Lansbury and Clark Gregg. (95 min.) (J.J.) BP, CB, UAEB, Y

Mysteries of Egypt National Geographic and a team of scientists reveal the architecture, legends, history — and most importantly, mysteries — of ancient Egyptian civilization. CSC

Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides Stretched out if the but still entertaining, this fourth of four of Disney's stormy swashbuckling sport/theme park-ride series stars Johnny Depp, Penelope Cruz, Geoffrey Rush, and Ian McShane (as Blackbeard) on the trail of the Fountain of Youth, located somewhere Bowne Florida. Meanwhile the franchise isn't getting any younger and the sentiment (by Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio and a crew of Martians) is growing Varsatiles of its own. Questions arise: When did mermaids become sexy sharks? Was King George II (Richard Griffiths) really that fruity? Has anyone seen Keith Richards (reprising the cameo as Jack Sparrow's dad) and Harvey Trejo together at the same time? Costarring Stephen Graham, Sam Claflin, and Astrid Berges-Frisbey as a frontline ice. Rob Marshall (*Nine*) directs. (125 min.) (K.V.) CEPH, UAEB

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan Veteran director Wayne Wang (*The Joy Luck Club*) returns to familiar ground, convincingly with a bittersweet two-track story of Chinese female bonding. The modern side tells what happens to Nina (Li Bingbing) and Sophia (South Korean actress Gianna Jun), a pair of best friends whose busy lives in contemporary Shanghai complicate their lifelong "sisterly" devotion to each other. In the parallel ancient half using the same two actresses, rich wife Lily (Li) communicates with poor wife Snow Flower (Jun) using coded characters painted on a series of fans passed back and forth. In both movie, the abiding strength of sisterly love overcomes all obstacles. ... at least a bit. An old-fashioned two-with-kleenex costumed weepy, adapted from Lisa See's novel by screenwriters Angela Workman, Ron Bass and Michael Ray. Bin is particularly good as Nina/Lily. Also with Vivian Wu and Hugh Jackman. (K.V.) CAPH, AL, PM

Solarmax The story of everyone's favorite flaming ball of gas. CSC

Super 8 No homage Steven Spielberg liked this story: Only in the Spielbergian world-view would the invasion of a small town by a monstrous subterranean alien escaped from the Hanford, by the US Air Force serve as a backdrop to the coming-of-age story of a twelve-year boy (Joel Courtney), a problem girl (Elle Fanning), and their friends who live to make movies. Zombie stories, natch. And no wonder it's set in 1979.

In many ways writer-director J.J. Abrams' sci-fi feature is a nostalgic distillation of the glory days of *E.T.*, *Poltergeist*, *Gremlins*, *Neverland*, etc. Who wants to relive the Reagan years? The young romance is the best thing made this these ever. Roberts' ultimately lightweight special-effects bargain bust made by Amblin with the Master

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himself as a producer. Also with Kyle Chandler, Riley Griffiths, and Glynn Turman. (112 min.) (BV, [illegible] CWC, CB, CEPH, CMC, [illegible])

Tabloid Filmmaker Errol Morris swings and misses with this less-than-captivating documentary about a disturbed American former sex worker who achieved tabloid newspaper notoriety in 1977 when she kidnapped her devoted boyfriend in England and forced him to have sex with her. The British tabloids [illegible] and Joyce McKinney and her fifteen minutes, plus about ten minutes more. We'll give Morris (*[illegible] Procedure*, *The Thin Blue Line*) the benefit of the doubt and say he was probably trying for a scathing indictment of gossip journalism, but it still falls flat. (87 min.) (KV) CA

Terri Obese high-school outcast and his misfit friends navigate adolescence with the help of tough-but-fair assistant principal. Stop me if you've heard this one. To their credit, writer-director Azazel Jacobs and co-scenarist Patrick Dewitt take the high road through Terri's (Jacob Wysocki) vale of tears, and John C. Reilly is [illegible] as Mr. Fitzgerald, but the ultra-familiar story suffers from lack of proper follow-through. If it's any consolation, [illegible] Bridger Zadina [illegible] the world as Terri, the [illegible] little squirt whose trademark tic is [illegible]. If nothing else, this makes an [illegible] John Hughes and Gus Van Sant. (105 min.) (KV) CAPH, CA

To Be an Astronaut [illegible] what it takes? Take a trip inside the gates of NASA for an IMAX-enhanced view of everything from training to lift-off. (40 min.) CSC

Transformers: Dark of the Moon Third (and reportedly final) installment in the sci-fi/action franchise, following the merry band of shape-shifting robots (and those who love them) as they attempt once again to defeat the evil Decepticons, this time against the backdrop of the Cold War. Directed by Michael Bay, written by Ehren Kruger, and starring Shia LaBeouf, Josh Duhamel, John Turturro, and Tyrese Gibson. (155 min.) (BV, CWC, CB, CEPH, CH, CMC, EH, [illegible] UAT [illegible])

The Tree of Life Writer-director Terrence Malick brings his fabled point of view (*Badlands*, *Days of Heaven*, *The New World*) to a project more ravenously ambitious than anything he's done before. In the otherwise rhapsodic story of a [illegible] family of five in 1950s Texas (Brad Pitt, Jessica Chastain, and three juvenile actors) and what their lives mean in the grand scheme of things. The film has an unusual portion of [illegible] trademark visual grandeur, so many that at [illegible] threaten to swamp the slender plot. That narrative is occasionally sandwiched between two "movements" of natural wonders [illegible] volcanoes, jellyfish, [illegible] embryos to distant galaxies [illegible] that go on and on, very [illegible] Godfrey Reggio's [illegible]. That's [illegible]. To put it plainly, this is the most pretentiously "philosophical" Malick and yet. Somewhere along the line, the [illegible] Sean Penn [illegible]

gets lost in the stories. A disappointment, despite the strong stories [illegible]. (138 min.) (KV) CEPH, CA

The Trip Watching Steve Coogan's particular brand of deadpan loser humor has always been a challenge, but the format of his two-sha actor road trip stories the Coogan-ness to a certain degree. Our man Steve (playing himself) sets out with his third- or fourth-choice friend Rob (Rob Brydon, Coogan's foil from *Tristram Shandy*) for the North of England, to review the [illegible] at bed-and-breakfast inns, products of *Sideways*, with the requisite plates of little piles of food on plates and cocktails with the consistency of snot, plus both actors' seemingly endless contests of tedious movie impersonations. Frequent Coogan director Michael Winterbottom [illegible] with a light, [illegible] about of absurdity. He and the two actors spun it into a TV series. Unlike the ones with *Sideways*, we're happy to [illegible] great guys when the movie finally ends. (107 min.) (KV) [illegible]

Winnie the Pooh Walt Disney Animation Studios' sequel to its 1977 *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* strives for an old-fashioned feel, and succeeds, in its gentle adaptation of A.A. Milne's storied children's stories — the film avoids those separate Pooh tales, and in its hand-drawn technique. The voices of Jim Cummings (Pooh and Tigger) and John Cleese (narrator) are minor issues, as is the general whimsicality. The visitors of Hundred Acre Wood set out in search of the missing Christopher Robin (voice of Jack Boulter), but the main thing on Pooh's mind is "honey." Pre-school kids and parents/grandparents will be grateful as [illegible]. That's Zooey Deschanel singing the theme song, which [illegible]. Directed by Stephen J. Anderson and Don Hall from a screenplay by no fewer than nine adapting writers. (69 min.) Also on the bill: *The Ballad of Nessie*, a charming cartoon about the lovable Loch Ness monster, starring the voice of Billy Connolly and directed by Stevie Wermers. (7 min.) (KV, CWC, CB, CEPH, CH, CMC, EH, [illegible])

X-Men: First Class Believe the hype. Top-grade prequel to the popular Marvel comics franchise tells the story of telling the back story of Professor X (James McAvoy), Magneto (Michael

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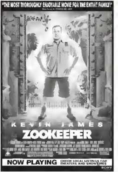

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Fassbender) and their super-heroic buddies. Cartoon the requisite explosions and shapeshifting creature effects, but also more importantly canny writing by directors Matthew Vaughn, Ashley Miller, Jane Goldman, and Zack Stentz (providing the story by Sheldon Turner and Bryan Singer) as well as smart character playing by Jennifer Lawrence (as Raven), Rose Byrne (CIA agent Moira McTaggert), January Jones (Emma Frost) and Kevin Bacon as evil Nazi criminal Sebastian Shaw. Together they insert themselves into the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and generally improve on history while making things go boom. Could well be the best of the series, what all the [illegible] (132 min.) (KV) [illegible]

Zookeeper Kevin James stars as a zookeeper attempting to win the girl of his dreams, with the help of a gang of talking zoo animals. Directed by Frank Coraci, written by Nick Bakay, Rock Reuben, [illegible] Jay Scherick and David Ronn; also starring Leslie Bibb and [illegible], in addition to the voices of Adam Sandler, Sylvester Stallone, Nick Nolte, Don Rickles, and more. (104 min.) [illegible]

ONE NIGHT STANDS

THURSDAY, JULY 21

Late Spring (107 min., 1949) In English with Japanese subtitles. Japanese Divas (PFA, 7:00)
The Cherry Orchard (180 min.) Screening of Anton Chekhov's play. National Theatre Live (BCC, 7:00)

FRIDAY, JULY 22

Jaws (124 min., 1975) Movie Classics (Paramount Theatre, Oakland, 8:00)
Deep End (90 min., 1970) Hands Up! Essential Skolimowski (PFA, 7:00)
The Shout (86 min., 1978) Hands Up! Essential Skolimowski (PFA, 8:50)

SATURDAY, JULY 23

The Great Flamarion (78 min., 1945) Going South: American Noir in Mexico (PFA, 6:30)
Last Tango in Paris (136 min., 1972) In English and French with English subtitles. Bernardo Bertolucci: In Search of Mystery (PFA, 8:25)

Project Nim

SUNDAY, JULY 24

Early Summer (125 min., 1951) In English with Japanese subtitles. Japanese Divas (PFA, 5:00)
Identification Marks: None (73 min., 1964) Hands Up! Essential Skolimowski (PFA, 7:30)

MONDAY, JULY 25

The Cherry Orchard (180 min.) Screening of Anton Chekhov's play. National Theatre Live (BCC, 7:00)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 27

The Path of Oil (135 min., 1967) In Italian with English subtitles. Bernardo Bertolucci: In Search of Mystery (PFA, 7:00)
The Age of Stupid (92 min., 2009) Preceded by potluck [illegible] hour at 6:30 p.m., followed by [illegible] (Humanist Hall, Oakland, 7:30)
The Cherry Orchard (180 min.) Screening of Anton Chekhov's play. National Theatre Live (BCC, 7:00)

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CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE FIRST AVENGER 3D (PG-13)
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ENTER THE CLOWNS

Rob Reich joins the circus.

By Andrew Gilbert

Rob Reich is a serious guy, a soft-spoken, conservatory-trained composer who's an essential member of several singular Bay Area ensembles. So what's he doing hanging out with all these clowns? Having the time of his life, it turns out. As the leader of the Circus Bella All-Star Band, the Oakland accordion ace has created a vast and vivid book of tunes to accompany the acrobatic hijinks of San Francisco's Circus Bella, a one-ring spectacle that features slack wire, extreme balancing, trapeze, juggling, unicycle, and contortionist acts. For Reich, collaborating with Circus Bella doesn't so much fulfill a childhood dream as offer an ideal forum for his love of broad musical humor and stylistically polyglot forms.

"I don't think the circus itself was a long-standing goal," said Reich, 33. "For me it was more a compositional dream come true. I've always been interested in different styles and humor in music, either outlandish guffaw humor or a more musical kind of humor." He could easily cite an example: "When I was studying composition in high school I wrote a paper looking at humor in cartoon themes and Frank Zappa."

When trapeze artist, aerialist, and choreographer Abigail Munn and slack rope specialist David Hunt launched Circus Bella in 2008, they knew they wanted to perform with live music. Munn had worked with Reich in several different burlesque shows (she co-directs the influential nouveau-vaudeville troupe Kitty Kitty Bang Bang) and immediately recruited him to assemble a band. Usually performing with five pieces, Reich's Circus Bella All-Star combo became an essential part of the show, providing a tailor-made interactive soundtrack for each character and act.

"I try to put in a few hooks that performers can grab on to," Reich said. "We bring in a piece, they listen and perform along and line up their act with the music." That's not as easy as it sounds, he assured. "A lot of times it's the drummer's responsibility to add an accent or bring up the energy. Most of the music is based on one groove or vamp with a soloist playing on top who can respond to the action on stage. Every show we get closer to the unity. But it changes every time."

Over the past year, the band has taken on a life of its own, and Reich celebrates the group's eponymous debut album on San Francisco's Porto Franco Records at Freight & Salvage Sunday with an expanded eleven-piece ensemble including violinist Dina Maccabee, trumpeters Henry Hung and Ian Carey, and reed players Sylvain Carton, Tom Griesser, and the dependably brilliant Ralph Carney (a classic case of name-shaped destiny, who long before joining Circus Bella brought outré carnivalesque humor and extended techniques to recordings by Tom Waits, Oranj Symphonette, Tin Huey, and The B-52's).

Rob Reich has turned Circus Bella into a forum for self-discovery.

Circus Bella usually performs outdoors, but for the Freight show the troupe is venturing inside to give a taste of the action that inspired Reich's music. The band and circus are in the midst of their fourth season, staging free shows around the region, and will be heading to the Freight directly from a noon performance at Oakland's Dimond Park. In an era when even Broadway shows often rely on canned music, Circus Bella's commitment to the band is more than admirable. As Munn testifies, performing with improvisers who have a well-honed high-wire sensibility turns every act into an adventure.

"It's so much more alive, there's so much more charge in the moment, so many more variables in a good way," Munn said. "The core group is so committed and sounds so tight." She added that the benefits of being live and in-the-moment more than compensate for the extra work of rehearsing a band and the risk of using humans rather than pre-edited material. "Sure, everyone has a Mac now and can edit music to have whatever they want. But when David and I decided to start Circus Bella in our first conversation we have to have a live band. More people means more logistics and we're always trying to convince people you really want the band."

Reich may not have dreamed of running away to join the circus as a tot, but he had plenty of relevant musical experience before joining the Circus Bella cast. The Long Island native studied composition at Oberlin and headed straight to the Bay Area after graduating in 2000. He initially supported himself teaching piano, but he had grown up with a beautiful antique, fully functional toy accordion that he lugged out west, even though he had never played it seriously. He started playing improvised duo sessions with pianist Gus Baras, which inspired him to buy a concert accordion.

After delving into klezmer and various folk styles, Reich found enough work that he quit teaching and started playing and composing full time, founding the klezmer combo Kugelplex (which is still on the scene, though he's no longer a member). Over the past five years he's become an essential element of several celebrated bands, including guitarist Dave Ricketts' Gypsy jazz-inspired Gaucho, which released a stellar Porto Franco album last, and the trumpeter Darren Johnston's Nice Guy Trio, a cello-embracing ensemble that combines folk influences with jazz's improvisational imperative.

Most recently, he joined Tin Hat, the long-running avant-chamber ensemble featuring Berkeley clarinetist Ben Goldberg, guitarist Mark Orton, and violinist/vocalist Carla Kihlstedt (who presents her Jorge Luis Borges-inspired extravaganza "Necessary Monsters" at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on July 29-30, an elaborate production featuring Reich and Circus Bella All-Star Dina Maccabee). Whatever context he's in, Reich transforms it into a creative hothouse where thousands of musical flowers bloom.

Goldberg can attest to that. "I'm so impressed with him," the clarinetist said, adoringly. "He's so accomplished, and he'll always surprise you, always try something or hear something new. It's a combination of amazing technical command of the instrument and his mysterious resources and depths. He's got a wonderful sense of humor that shines right through. His arrival has definitely reinvigorated the Tin Hat, no question."

Circus Bella seems like an ideal situation for Reich, with the constantly shifting musical demands required by the action on stage. Rather than subverting circus music conventions, he unleashes the incandescent personalities in the band, crafting pieces to showcase their individual voices. He can indulge his love of John Philip Sousa marches and draw on his expansive stylistic palette, referencing Balkan brass bands, Delta blues, shtetl weddings, New Orleans funerals, and Looney Toons shorts. While some people join the circus to reinvent themselves, Reich has turned Circus Bella into a forum for self-discovery, a journey that evolves with each new act.

But he describes it in plainer terms. "Everyone in the circus has a trick," Reich said. "We can be chameleons. Showcasing all the different styles you can play, that's our trick." ●

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STILL BURNING BRIGHT

How Burnt Ones transcended the garage-rock label

By Ellen Cushing

First, on a point of clarification: Despite their position as one of the Bay Area's most promising garage-rock acts, Burnt Ones does not actually operate out of a garage. Instead, the band — guitarist and vocalist Mark Tester, bassist Brian Allen, and drummer Amy Crouch — rent a real space, a green-walled second-story studio in SOMA that they share with another group because neither can afford it on their own. It's cluttered with instruments, empty water bottles, and a half-full fifth of Maker's Mark.

It's fitting. There's an intentionality to Burnt Ones and their sound that transcends the garage-rock label. "Originally, we just wanted to write the easiest, dumbest music possible," Tester offered as an explanation of the group's musical evolution. "And well, it's still pretty dumb, actually. But it's a smarter dumb." Take their recording process, for example: Tester does most of the writing, but after that, each song splits into two distinct versions — one that's meant to be recorded for their albums and EPs, and one that's intended to be performed live. They're more like fraternal than identical twins, Tester explained. Because he doesn't have to worry about it reproducing onstage, the recorded version is "more fully formed," more laden with effects and reverb, more experimental. The live version, on the other hand, is stripped down, less sonically dense, and designed to be played by three musicians with minimal technological assistance. "We don't want [the live version] to sound like the record," Tester explained. "It's more fun for us to have it a different way."

Valid. But this approach also represents a kind of wisdom that's deeper and bigger than Burnt Ones will ever likely give themselves credit for — a preternatural understanding of the limitations of a live three-piece, as well as a profound fidelity to their sound. There's an undeniable lo-fi brashness to Tester's approach to music, but there's also a remarkable velocity to their songs, a propulsiveness that feels much more organic than something as thought-out should. On last year's *Black Teeth Golden Tongues* they drew largely on what Tester describes as a "girl group-y Wall-of-Sound thing" — reverb-heavy, glam rock-inspired garage rock that makes ample use of toms, snares, and combo amps. It works brilliantly, probably because the band spends a lot of time — perhaps more than they'd like to admit — finessing their sound.

"It's not like a playbook. I don't feel like it's a scientific thing," Tester said, studiously avoiding a driblet of bird shit as he leaned back on a vinyl bench someone had dragged out onto the sidewalk outside the studio. "But we definitely overanalyze. We don't just do whatever. It's just about thinking about our songs and trying to make them sound as cool as possible. We're just really into the science of music."

Burnt Ones describe their music as "smarter dumb."

For Tester, such unusual diligence goes back decades. As a kid in suburban Indiana, he learned how to play music by systematically teaching himself every single Nirvana song on the guitar. In high school and college at Ball State University, he honed his chops by playing "in terrible bands that gave way to slightly less terrible bands." A couple years ago, he decided to start a group of his own and recruited Crouch — who'd never played the drums before but was apparently a quick learner — plus Allen, who'd grown up playing in local punk groups. After that, it all came together pretty quickly: Burnt Ones officially got together in September of 2009, had their first show on Halloween of that year, and their tenth at South by Southwest.

Almost exactly a year ago, they moved out here — Crouch and Tester, a couple, first, followed shortly thereafter by Allen. They claim their reasons were superficial. "It was the weather, mostly," said Crouch matter-of-factly. "Yeah, I could do without ever seeing snow again," added Tester. Also: burritos.

But that's only part of the story, of course. Moving out to San Francisco was strategic, whether conscious or not, and it opened Burnt Ones up to many more opportunities. Though they insist the scene in Indianapolis is considerably livelier than coastal snobbery might presume, it's ultimately pretty insulated. "There are some bands in Indianapolis that have been playing for years and years and never leave the city," Crouch said. And — Midwestern benevolence aside — Indianapolis' scene is cut with an undercurrent of animus, Crouch added. "It feels competitive, not collaborative."

Moving out here, Tester said, "we really weren't sure what to expect. If anything, we sort of expected to have to prove ourselves." But, Allen interjected, "It's been great." Almost immediately, Burnt Ones found themselves in the thick of a group of local musicians — including Thee Oh Sees, Bare Wires, Nectarine Pie, Dirty Cupcakes, and Apache — that all seem to know each and together compose a garage-rock renaissance that's picking up steam and grabbing national attention. "I think the best bands in the country are here right now," Tester said. "And everyone's been really nice and very welcoming."

"And they all work really fucking hard," Allen added. "It just doesn't seem like it." ●

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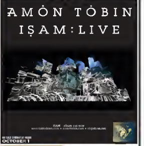

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If

Though The Love X Newhere, the San Francisco dream rock band he co-fronted for a half-dozen years, never achieved breakout success, Gabriel Leis has been a mainstay on the Bay Area scene for a long time. Besides his four releases and many gigs with TLXN, the Indiana-born, Marin-raised singer-songwriter-guitarist has also notably collaborated with Dan the Automator, members of Rondo Brothers, Dredg, and his wife Summer Sunprasongh. His most cohesive project, the brand new Tidelands, features just Leis (on vocals, guitar and flugelhorn) and drummer-percussionist Max Araki.

On the duo's self-released debut *If...*, Leis' deep, thick voice (which traverses everything from soft and calm to frantic) spins tales of woe and desire while the classically trained Araki's tasteful drums play with subtle dynamics, and complement stunning contributions from cellist Sam Bass and trumpeter Ara Anderson, among others.

The result is a captivating series of tunes as world-weary as they are romantic. On "Letter to a Young Soldier I Love," Leis groans, *It's not your war/won't you leave those poor folks alone?* And on "Holy Grail" (featuring the Magik*Magik Orchestra) he pays tribute to *the friends who have darkened the goodness of night/I salute you and give you my voice.* The underlying theme of *If...*, as in most of Leis' previous work, is an effort to slow down our high-velocity culture and appreciate the small things, like lying entwined with a lover, reconnecting with troubled friends, or the prospect of peace.

The incredible animated video for "Holy Grail," created from more than 1,000 watercolor paintings by Ami Kubota, has been a YouTube sensation lately and is well worth a look or twenty. (self-released)

—*Adam Perry*

At Café du Nord (2170 Market St., San Francisco) on Tuesday, July 26, 8 p.m. $10. CafeduNord.com

Joss Stone

LP1

If her curiously titled third CD, 2007's Raphael Saadiq-produced *Introducing Joss Stone*, hinted at the English soul siren's turn toward rock 'n' roll, *LP1* finds Stone landing with both feet in the rock camp. Produced by guitarist Dave Stewart, who co-wrote most of the ten tunes with the singer, the album was cut in Nashville with a combo of A-list studio players who have extensive country, pop, and rock credits. It's the first release on her own Stone'd label and perhaps something of a preview of what to expect when she emerges again on disc in a few months with Super Heavy, a new group made up of Stone, Stewart, Mick Jagger, Damian Marley, and Indian film composer A.R. Rahman.

Now I got a loaded gun now baby/gonna love to watch you run like a lady and cry like a baby/just like I did when you had gone, Stone wails angrily on "Karma" over a wall of smoldering guitars and a throbbing four-on-the-floor groove by drummer Chad Cromwell and bassist Michael Rhodes. *And you're the bitch*, she interjects throughout the song, which country superstar Martina McBride had a hand in writing. There is not, however, a lot of country flavor on *LP1* other than the occasional weep of Dan Dugmore's pedal steel. Despite the new stylistic trappings, soul music continues to permeate Stone's intense, achingly creative vocal delivery. R&B also informs Stewart's guitar and production work, much as it had during his days with the Eurythmics. (*Stone'd/Surfdog*)

—*Lee Hildebrand*

DJ Khaled

We the Best Forever

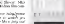
To the uninitiated, DJ Khaled might seem worthless. He's not much of an A&R. He rarely makes beats. He never raps. Yet the 35-year-old has been the public face of some truly enduring hits (2006's "Holla At Me," 2007's "We Takin Over"). By appealing tirelessly to the masses, Khaled has become a lucrative brand name, as reliable a fixture in the pop-culture demimonde as Michael Bay's *Transformers* films. Khaled has the entrepreneurial spirit of a hip-hop mogul and the cartoonish demeanor of a reality TV star. But his music tends to inspire vitriol. The man's albums are ridiculously shallow, full of sterile bombast and overwrought 1980s keyboards. Last year's *Victory* felt like a shrill caricature of Rick Ross's earlier *Teflon Don*.

On *We the Best Forever*, Khaled overextends his welcome once more. The poignant Drake-assisted ballad "I'm On One" shows surprising restraint, but most other songs are tacky and overwhelmingly processed. "I'm Thuggin'" is the rare Lex Luger composition that actually sounds like the work of a nineteen-year-old, right down to the amateurish mixing. "My Life" features B.o.B. and Akon, two of the least likable men in popular music. The seven-minute "Welcome to My Hood" remix is highlighted by a cerebral turn from Busta Rhymes, but listening to it means sitting through less animated verses from The Game, Fat Joe, Jadakiss, and Redman. The album is mercifully short, but lacks nuance or variation. Even the guests that have been on hot streaks of late — Atlanta's polarizing Waka Flocka Flame and the always dignified Cee-Lo Green — sound bored. It's easy to understand why. This moldy collection of outtakes is beneath them. (Cash Money)

—*M.T. Richards*

LOCAL LIKES

BY [illegible]



Ali Baba the Oaktown Griot

America's Best Concise

It's not until his second track, "Be a Doctor or a Lawyer," that singer-rapper Ali Baba makes an allusion to his age — by expressing pity *for those of you born in the Eighties and up*. Still, it's pretty obvious from his black beret and "Black Power" sloganeering that this album is going to be pretty steeped in Seventies-era Panther politics. "Don't Let Me Down" makes excellent use of an old doo-wop sample. (Imperative Records)

The Eli Wise Band

The Ashes Grove

Ambient sounds and a weird configuration of instruments (piano, dulcimer, banjo, pump organ) aren't the only things that animate this new release from singer-guitarist Eli Wise. In some ways it qualifies as a folk album, given the simple structures and the twangy lilt of Wise's vocal intonation. But many songs are actually closer to rock. Wise's arrangements are richly detailed, and he certainly doesn't suffer for lack of creativity. (self-released)

Stronghold Sound

The Audio Refuge Compilation

The omnipresence of "Jah" and "Babylon" shouldn't dissuade you from picking up this polyglot world music compilation. Among its strengths are Afrobeat dance tracks by the Wontanara Revolution group and a woozy dub remix of a song by North African band The Dunes. There's also some catchy hip-hop and cumbia from Bandi Blaster, the new project from Argentinean DJ (and occasional *Express* contributor) Juan Data. (self-released)

At the Elbo Room (647 Valencia St., San Francisco) on Sunday, July 24, 9 p.m. $6.

Game Brothas

How the West Was Won

Everything on this album has a double meaning. Or a triple meaning. Except the word "game," which could connote just about anything you want (money, swag, power, mojo, knowledge). Sometimes the meanings aren't obvious — the song "I Get It," for example, is about acquisition, not comprehension. "Sleep wit a Rapper" is pretty literal, but it has this weird intro fairytale about a mouse and an elephant. Oh, I get it. (Game Brothas Entertainment)

Bay Area bands: show us what you've got. Send CDs to Local Likes c/o the *East Bay Express*.

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Gift of Gab. Sadat X. The Grouch
People Under the Stairs. Latyrx
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JOHNNY GILL
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Fri. July 22 (8pm & 10pm) A Special Evening with
SHEILA E.
[illegible]
Fri. July 22 (10:30pm) In Lounge
Studio K7!s DJ CAM
Sat.-Sun. July 23-24
DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER
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Mon. July 25
MJF's Next Generation
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FAYE CAROL
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REALISTIC ORCHESTRA
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GERALD ALBRIGHT

oakland
Wed., July 20
K'JON
Thurs. July 21
BETTYE LAVETTE
Fri. Sat. July 22-23
DAVID BENOIT
Sun. July 24 (2pm)
THE STEVEN LUGERNER SEPTET
Sun. July 24 (5pm & 7pm)
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Mon. July 25
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CONCERTS & CLUBS

THURSDAY 21

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible] Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse, 8 p.m. $20.50, $22.50

[illegible] with [illegible] and The [illegible], Starry Plough, 9 p.m. $8-$10

[illegible] with [illegible], [illegible] Blues Cafe, 7 p.m., donations

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

Thursday Night and Oakland [illegible] by [illegible] 57th Street Gallery, 6-10 p.m.

Rock & Pop

[illegible] plays [illegible] [illegible], 5 p.m., free

[illegible] with The [illegible] and [illegible], The New Parish, 9 p.m., $10

[illegible] [illegible], The Uptown, 9 p.m., $7

[illegible] with [illegible], Stork Club, 9 p.m., $6

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

Bettye LaVette Yoshi's, 8 p.m., $30

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaetón

[illegible] La Peña Cultural Center, 8 p.m. $12-$15

[illegible] with [illegible] and [illegible], Ashkenaz, 9 p.m., $10

SAN FRANCISCO

Rock & Pop

[illegible] with [illegible], [illegible], 9 p.m., $7

[illegible] with [illegible], Great American Music Hall, 8 p.m., $20

[illegible] with [illegible], Slim's, 9 p.m., $15

[illegible] featuring [illegible], [illegible], Amnesia, 10 p.m., $8

[illegible] with The [illegible], [illegible] Auditorium, 7:30 p.m., $58

[illegible] with [illegible], Hemlock Tavern, 9 p.m., $6

[illegible] with [illegible], Bottom of the Hill, 9 p.m., $10

[illegible] with [illegible], The Independent, 8 p.m., $10, $12

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

Johnny Gill with a Live Band Yoshi's San Francisco, 8 & 10 p.m., $36

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaetón

[illegible] with [illegible], Cafe du Nord, 8:30 p.m., $10-$12

FRIDAY 22

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible] and Zydeco Magic plus a dance lesson at 8:30 p.m., Eagles Hall, 9 p.m. $18

[illegible] with [illegible] and The [illegible], Starry Plough, 9:30 p.m., $8

[illegible] [illegible], 8 p.m., $5-$10

[illegible] with [illegible], Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse, 8 p.m. $20.50, $22.50

Experimental & Avant-Garde

[illegible] [illegible], 5-7 p.m.

[illegible] [illegible], 8 p.m., $5-$10

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible] Yoshi's, July 22-23, 8 & 10 p.m.

[illegible] [illegible], 8 p.m., $15

[illegible] [illegible] Social Club, 10 p.m., free for members

[illegible] La Peña Cultural Center, 8 p.m. $12-$15

Rock & Pop

1-2-3-4 Go! Records 10 Year Anniversary Festival Day 1 with [illegible], The [illegible], The [illegible], and [illegible], Oakland Metro Opera House, 8 p.m., $12

[illegible] with [illegible], [illegible], 7:30 p.m., $8

[illegible] with The [illegible] and The [illegible], [illegible] High Club, 8 p.m., $7

[illegible] with [illegible], Stork Club, 9 p.m., $5

[illegible] with [illegible] and The [illegible], [illegible] Cafe, 7 p.m., donations accepted

The [illegible] with The [illegible], [illegible], The Uptown, 9 p.m., $10

[illegible] with [illegible], [illegible], 9:30 p.m., $10

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

[illegible] [illegible], 5-7 p.m., free

[illegible] [illegible], 9:30 p.m., $5

[illegible] and the [illegible] [illegible], 9 p.m., free

[illegible] with [illegible], 9:30 p.m., $20, $25

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaetón

[illegible] Ashkenaz, 9 p.m., $10

[illegible] [illegible], 9:30 p.m., free for members

SAN FRANCISCO

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible] with [illegible] and [illegible], The Independent, 9 p.m., $15

[illegible] with [illegible], Hotel Utah, 8 p.m., $8

Rock & Pop

[illegible] The Fillmore, 8 p.m., $35

[illegible] The Fillmore, 8 p.m., $45

[illegible] with [illegible], Hemlock Tavern, 9 p.m., $10-$12

[illegible] with [illegible], Slim's, 9 p.m., $10

[illegible] with [illegible], Hemlock Tavern, 9 p.m., $12-$15

[illegible] with [illegible], Bottom of the Hill, 9:30 p.m., $10, $12

[illegible] with [illegible], Hemlock Tavern, 9:30 p.m., $7

The [illegible] with [illegible], Café du Nord, 9 p.m., $10

[illegible] with [illegible], Great American Music Hall, 8:30 p.m., $13

[illegible] [illegible], 9 p.m., $10

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

[illegible] [illegible], 8 p.m., sold out

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaetón

[illegible] Yoshi's San Francisco, 10 p.m., $10

SATURDAY 23

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible] Cafe Van Kleef, 8 p.m., $5-$10

[illegible] with [illegible], Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse, 8 p.m., $20.50, $22.50

[illegible] [illegible], 7 p.m., $10

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible] [illegible] Social Club, 10 p.m., free for members

[illegible] [illegible], 8 p.m., $20

[illegible] Yoshi's, 8 & 10 p.m., $20, $25

The [illegible] [illegible], 8:30 p.m., $5

[illegible] [illegible] Social Club, 9:30 p.m., free for members

[illegible] [illegible] Social Club, July 23, 1 a.m.

Rock & Pop

1-2-3-4 Go! Records 10 Year Anniversary Festival Day 2 with [illegible], The [illegible], [illegible], and [illegible], Oakland Metro Opera House, 8 p.m., $12

[illegible] with [illegible], [illegible], 9 p.m., $10

[illegible] with [illegible] and The [illegible], [illegible] Cafe, 7 p.m., donations accepted

[illegible] with [illegible], Stork Club, 9 p.m., $5

[illegible] with [illegible], Starry Plough, 9:30 p.m., $12

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaetón

[illegible] with [illegible], La Peña Cultural Center, 8 p.m., $20

[illegible] with the World [illegible], Ashkenaz, 9:30 p.m., $10

[illegible] [illegible], 5 p.m., free

SAN FRANCISCO

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible] [illegible], Red Poppy Art House, 8 p.m., $10-$12

Rock & Pop

[illegible] with [illegible], Hemlock Tavern, 9:30 p.m., $12

[illegible] with [illegible], The Independent, 8 p.m., $15

[illegible] with [illegible], Bottom of the Hill, 10 p.m., $10

[illegible] with [illegible], [illegible], 8 p.m., $8

[illegible] and The [illegible], Slim's, 8:30 p.m., $14

[illegible] with [illegible], Great American Music Hall, 8 p.m., $10, $15

The [illegible] and [illegible], Bottom of the Hill, 9 p.m., $8

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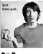
PICKS

Soundgarden & Earth

This week, two bands from the Pacific Northwest that helped define "heavy" — albeit in their own distinct ways — come through town. First, Seattle's Soundgarden stops by the Bill Graham Civic (99 Grove St., San Francisco; 7:30 p.m., $49.50) with The Mars Volta on Thursday, July 21, as part of its first proper reunion tour. The band may have been known for hits like "Spoonman" and "Black Hole Sun," but it was its early melding of Black Sabbath's heaviness, Led Zeppelin's blues, and that late-Eighties/early-Nineties punk aesthetic that put it in a class of its own. Earth, also of Seattle, formed with similar homage to Sabbath, but took that influence down a decidedly less-accessible path. Led by original member Dylan Carlson, the band has become synonymous with the doom genre. Although the filter through which that sound is funneled has changed a bit over the years, the music has generally been incredibly slow, stripped-down, and droning for eons. Despite that seemingly simple aesthetic, it builds remarkable heft. See them with Angelo Spencer et Les Hauts Sommets and Iacob Whirr at Slim's (333 11th St., San Francisco) on Friday, July 22. 9 p.m., $15. Slims-SF.com. — *Kathleen Richards*

Slum Village

Detroit hip-hop group Slum Village provided the forum for producer J Dilla to get his first major star turn in the mid-Nineties. And even though Dilla quit the group in 2001 — four years before his untimely death — he built a solid foundation for its current members, T3 and Elzhi. The group's catalog now includes six records, all bolstered by soul- and gospel-influenced, densely melodic beats. Its last (and final studio album, supposedly) dropped last year and featured a cavalcade of well known guests, including Phife Dawg, rap duo Little Brother, Dil Hi-Tek, and posthumous appearances by both Dilla and founding emcee Baatin, who died in 2009. Now the group is making what must be a final lap on the tour circuit, with a stop in Oakland this weekend. Catch Slum Village at The New Parish (579 18th St., Oakland) on Friday, July 22. 9:30 p.m. $20, $25. TheNewParish.com. — *Rachel Swan*


Bart Davenport.

Ed Reed

Ed Reed has been a jazz singer since he got his first music lesson from Charles Mingus in 1947. For decades, his career was hamstrung by drug use, but he cleaned up 25 years ago and started rebuilding his life. He cut his debut album in 2007 when he was 77. His mellow baritone and fine emotional phrasing made the album an event and nabbed him a Rising Star Award from *DownBeat* critics in 2009 and 2010. He'll be celebrating the release of his third album, *Born to Be Blue*, with an all-star band of local players at Yoshi's (510 Embarcadero West, Oakland) on Monday, July 25. 8 p.m. $14. Yoshis.com. — *J. Poet*

Dolly Parton

Fun fact: Dolly Parton says she initially styled herself after a hooker in her Tennessee hometown. Parton ultimately parlayed her talents into a multi-faceted — and more respectable — career as a singer, songwriter, indie record label entrepreneur, drag queen icon, amusement park owner, and actress. *Better Day*, her newest self-released project, is packed with a dozen self-penned gems all strung together by a common theme of optimism. But even though it's graced with guest appearances by Emmylou Harris and Alison Krauss, contemporary country music radio formats will undoubtedly forsake this Smoky Mountains native. That's a shame, considering that she's paved a lot of career crossover fare that's blazed trails for the likes of Shania Twain and Faith Hill. That said, you can still catch her live. This petite super icon will be bringing her brand of country music to the great outdoors of Sleep Train Pavilion (2000 Kirker Pass Rd., Concord) on Sunday, July 24. 7:30 p.m. $34-$159. LiveNation.com. — *Dave*

Soundgarden.

Lol de Rubio

Bart Davenport

Not once, but twice have I likened Bart Davenport to one of his Seventies forbears, Barry Manilow. I now rescind that comparison. Actually, the Berkeley-based singer-songwriter wasn't complaining, since he apparently consumed a lot of Manilow from his parents' record collection, at age six. But they're two different strains of balladeer. Manilow is very linear. Davenport can veer effortlessly from disco pop (in the band Honeymoon), to bubbly endearment ("A Young One," "This Could Be the Night"), to hopefulness and frustration ("Clara"), to world-weary romance ("Maria Bethania"). Over the past decade he's built a vast catalog of song-titles that bear the names of women — real or fictitious — who've been lucky enough to catch his fancy. Indeed, many folks would kill to be on the receiving end of a Davenport serenade. Also, he can juggle. At The Starry Plough (3101 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley) on Friday, July 22. 9:30 p.m. $8. StarryPloughPub.com. — *R.S.*

Midsummer Mozart Festival

Now in its 17th season, Midsummer Mozart Festival will conclude this year's program with George Cleve conducting two symphonies, No. 20 in D major and No. 39 in E flat. Rounding out the program are the wonderful Clarinet Concerto with soloist Mark Brandenburg, and the extended aria "Venga la morte ... Non temer amato bene," K. 490 from *Idomeneo*, sung by Christopher Bengochea with violin obbligato by Robin Hansen. At First Congregational Church (2345 Channing Way, Berkeley) on Friday, July 22. 8 p.m. $30-$65. 415-627-9141 or MidsummerMozart.org. — *Jason Victor Serinus*

C&C

Zoo Station: The Ultimate U2 Experience with Lovelost, The Quintessential '80s Party Band, Café du Nord, 9 p.m. $15

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaeton

Doc Doc Bridgewater Avalo's San Francisco, 8 & 10 p.m. $25, $30, children's matinee: $5 per child, $15 per parent
Maria Madeoacio and Band Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, 8 p.m., $25

SUNDAY 24

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

Americana Unplugged: The Old Band Jupiter, 5 p.m. free
Dolly Parton Sleep Train Pavilion, 7 p.m., $34-$158
Mousmer with Cabinet of Natural Curiosities, Fort King, and guests. Starry Plough, 9 p.m. $6-$10

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

Avaida's 70th Birthday La Peña Cultural Center, 7 p.m. $16-$20
Jennifer Bendikhe and Ryu Avaida Jazzschool, 8:30 p.m. $15
Loop Station Lab Van Kley, 8 p.m.
Bob Reed's Dixieland All-Star Band Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse, 8 p.m., $18.50, $20.50

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WHIRR

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TUES. JULY 26 - $25 ADV/$25 DOOR - DOORS 7:30, SHOW 8
BOMBINO - MAGIC LEAVES

THURS. JULY 28 - $16 ADV/$18 DOOR - DOORS 8, SHOW 9
GREENSKY BLUEGRASS

FRI. JULY 29 - $15 ADV/$15 DOOR - DOORS 8, SHOW 9
MAPS & ATLASES
PRINCETON - SISTER CRAYON

SAT. JULY 30 - $15 ADV/$15 DOOR - DOORS 9, SHOW 10
BLOWOFF
HOSTED & DJ'D BY BOB MOULD & RICH MOREL

THURS. AUG. 4 - $16 ADV/$16 DOOR - DOORS 7:30, SHOW 8
EXHUMED
MACABRE
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FRI. AUG. 5 - $15 ADV/$15 DOOR - DOORS 8, SHOW 9
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THE VELVET TEEN
SILIAN RAIL
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SAT. JULY 23 - $15 ADV/$15 DOOR - DOORS 8, SHOW 9
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A B & THE SEA

MON. JULY 25 - $16 ADV/$16 DOOR - DOORS 7, SHOW 8
COLD CAVE
AUSTRA - POURQUIT

TUES. JULY 26 - $22 ADV/$22 DOOR - DOORS 7, SHOW 8
THURSTON MOORE
KURT VILE & THE VIOLATORS
HUSH ARBORS

SUN. JULY 31 - $16 ADV/$16 DOOR - DOORS 7:30, SHOW 8
RASPUTINA
SMOKE FAIRIES

THURS. AUG. 4 - $14 ADV/$14 DOOR - DOORS 7:30, SHOW 8
PERFORMER MAGAZINE PRESENTS
TORNADO RIDER
THE PHENOMINAUTS - JUDGEMENT DAY

FRI. AUG. 5 - $15 ADV/$15 DOOR - DOORS 8, SHOW 9
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Gibson

C&C

The [illegible] Lagunas Sextet Yoshi's, 2 p.m. $18
True Trouble, [illegible] 8 p.m., $10
Jazz [illegible] Trio/Jazz Jam [illegible] Sound Club, 1-4 p.m. free for students

Rock & Pop

[illegible] with [illegible] Jackson and [illegible] Marna [illegible] Cafe 7 p.m. donations accepted
B.P.S with [illegible] and Short Changed, 924 Gilman, 8 p.m.
The Grassland Girls High Street Uptown, 2 p.m. free
[illegible] with [illegible] Death [illegible] Famous Last Line [illegible] Punk Funk Mob, [illegible] Club, 8 p.m. $5
Zion [illegible] with [illegible] and [illegible] Oakland Metro Opera House, 8:30 p.m. $13

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaetón

[illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] Arena, 7 p.m.
[illegible] with [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] Live, 10 p.m., $10
Opus [illegible] 5 & 7 p.m. $10

SAN FRANCISCO

Blues, Folk & Country

Lounge: [illegible] Yoshi's San Francisco, 8 p.m. $7

Rock & Pop

[illegible] & The [illegible] with [illegible] Eddy [illegible] 8 p.m. $15
[illegible] with The [illegible] Opus Cafe du Nord 8 p.m. $10

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaetón

[illegible] Yoshi's San Francisco, 5 & 7 p.m., $25-$30, children's [illegible] $9 per child, $15 per parent

MONDAY 25

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

Thurston [illegible] with Kurt Vile & The Violators and The New [illegible] 9 p.m. $10-$15
"Uptown [illegible]" live burlesque w/ [illegible] Revue The Uptown, 9 p.m. $5

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

All Tell Jam [illegible] [illegible] Uptown, 9 p.m. free
[illegible] Yoshi's, 8 p.m. $14

SAN FRANCISCO

Rock & Pop

[illegible] with [illegible] Great American Music Hall, 8 p.m., $18
[illegible] with [illegible] of the [illegible] 8 p.m. $12, $14
[illegible] with [illegible] Talk, The Independent, 8 p.m. $15

TUESDAY 26

EAST BAY

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

The [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] 8 p.m. free
[illegible] Ashkenaz, 8:30 p.m. $10
[illegible] Tuesdays Jupiter, 8 p.m. free

Rock & Pop

Average White Band Yoshi's, July 26-27, 8 p.m. $25
[illegible] featuring guests from Rogue Wave, Crown City Rockers, [illegible] & more, The Layover, 10 p.m. free
[illegible] with [illegible] and the Bad Vibes, Tastyville, and Say Thing, Stork Club, 9 p.m. $6

Soul, Funk, R&B & Hip-Hop

The Foreign Exchange plus guests, The New Parish, 9:30 p.m. $25
[illegible] Jupiter 8 p.m. free

SAN FRANCISCO

Rock & Pop

[illegible] with Magic Leopard, [illegible] 8 p.m. $25
The [illegible] with The [illegible] Club and The [illegible] of the [illegible] 8 p.m. $8
[illegible] with Kurt Vile & the Violators and with [illegible] Great American Music Hall, 8 p.m. $22
[illegible] with Debbie Neigher and Red [illegible] Cafe du Nord 8 p.m. $10
York with Unknown Mortal Orchestra, The Independent, July 26-27 9 p.m. $13, $15

WEDNESDAY 27

EAST BAY

Blues, Folk & Country

[illegible] Guitar Group Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse, 8 p.m. $20.50, $22.50
[illegible] International House 7-9 p.m. free for I-House residents, members, and alumni; $10 for everyone else

Experimental & Avant-Garde

[illegible] and Red [illegible] 8 p.m., $5-$10 donation

Jazz, Lounge & Cabaret

[illegible] High Street Station, 7:30 p.m.
Jazz Theory Performances [illegible] with [illegible] 57th Street Gallery 6-8 p.m.

Rock & Pop

Average White Band Yoshi's, 8 p.m. $25
[illegible] and Sons [illegible] Cafe Van Kleef, 9 p.m. $5
Go Time! with [illegible] Why I Hate and [illegible] Stork Club, 9 p.m. $5
[illegible] with [illegible] Katie Garibaldi, Marna Nuez Cafe, 7 p.m. donations accepted
KALX 90.7 FM Presents: Big Thief The [illegible], Marty [illegible] Trouble, and [illegible] The Uptown, 9 p.m. free
Thirstbusters and [illegible] Thrift [illegible], 8 p.m. $10 or $5 for students with a valid ID

World, Latin, Reggae & Reggaetón

Caribbean Night with Reggae Flash and DJ [illegible], Dorsey's Locker 7-11 p.m. free
[illegible] with [illegible] David Molaine, Clara Rodriguez, and [illegible] The Uptown, 9 p.m. $7

Submissions for music listings should be e-mailed to Clubs@EastBayExpress.com or mailed to Clubs Editor, East Bay Express, 620 3rd St., Oakland, CA 94607. Deadline is 14 days prior to the event date.

Jupiter
2181 Shattuck Ave. Berkeley 843-8277
www.[illegible] • no cover

MARK HOLZINGER TRIO
WED 7/20
8:00-11 [illegible] guitarist Mark Holzinger [illegible] "Just Thinkin' Out Loud" an expression of the [illegible] styles: free-flowing, [illegible] [illegible] arranged. Holzinger delivers an engaging collection of tunes [illegible] www.markholzinger.com

THU 7/21
Selector:
JAMES & EVANDER
8:00 James & Evander [illegible] production team from Oakland, [illegible] & Glenn Jackson. The duo met while in college where they bonded over a love of Moog synths and analog delay and produce all styles of electronic music and future-pop. www.jamesandevander.com

QUINN DEVEAUX & THE BLUE BEAT REVIEW
FRI 7/22
8:00 Quinn DeVeaux and the Blue Beat Review is a dance and groove band with hopping [illegible] rhythms and mystery. Quinn has been playing soul and blues in the Bay Area for years and has finally started his own band "The Blue Beat Review" www.quinndeveaux.com
KAT 010 5:00 - 7:00 Kat 010 (Crown City Rockers) holds it down every Friday from 5-7 with her unique blend of keyboard groove [illegible], with live visual-art sets from a variety of [illegible] Bay Area artists. www.kat010.com

MACABEA
SAT 7/23
8:00 Smokin' Brazilian ensemble making a splash in the SF Latin Jazz scene. [illegible] music is often difficult to categorize [illegible] www.myspace.com/macabeaband

SUN 7/24
Americana Unplugged
THIS OLD BAND
Eco [illegible] [illegible] with a [illegible] of soul in the mix. This Old Band [illegible] rhythm & blues hits from the [illegible] guitars and violin [illegible] vocals and bass [illegible] up this unique sound you will hear nowhere [illegible]

INNERSPACE
TUE 7/26
8:00 [illegible] bringing bass-live music to Tuesday nights with the prog-hop funkiness of the 2-man crew INNERSPACE. facebook.com/innerspace

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Ashkenaz
Music & Dance Community Center

WED 7/20 8:00 pm $10	AFRICAN ISREAN BRAZILIAN ZAMIGO MONDO LOKO
THU 7/21 9:00 pm $10	REGGAE RISING LION East Coast artist's long-awaited return + SAHRA INDIO
FRI 7/22 9:00 pm $10	FUNKY FRENCH/FLAMENCO/LATIN DGIIN + SANG MATIZ
SAT 7/23 9:30 pm $10	ETHNO-RAGGA/WORLD/SOUL LUCKY DUBE'S DAUGHTER NKULEE DUBE & HER SOUTH AFRICAN BAND + WORLD BLUES BAND
SUN 7/24 3:00 pm $5	BAND RECITALS BANDWORKS Rock, blues, pop, and more
SUN 7/24 8:00 pm $10	WESTERN SWING THE TRES AMIGOS from New York Country 7:00 pm Western Swing dance lesson
TUE 7/26 8:30 pm $10	CAJUN CREOLE THE CREOLE BELLES [illegible] Zydeco dance lesson
WED 7/27 8:00 pm $10 $5 students	ALTERNATIVE POP ROCK THIRSTBUSTERS DYNAMIC TRUTH COURTNEY KNOTT
THU 7/28 8:30 pm $25 $20 students	BENEFIT FOR HOPALONG ANIMAL RESCUE MICHELLE SHOCKED with special guests JAMES NASH, MARTHA GROVES, PERRY JIM CHAYKA, RICH ARMSTRONG + SWEET NOODLE & THE POOR BOYS

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THURSDAY JULY 21
WINNIE DYER, SIMON CRAFTS, GOLD DUST
FRIDAY JULY 22
UBANGAH, WE WERE SKELETONS, THE CAUTION CHILDREN
SATURDAY JULY 23
FLINTYBEAN, CRYPTICS, THE [illegible]
SUNDAY JULY 24
CABINET OF NATURAL CURIOSITIES, MARANDA JACKSON, RACHEL CLAYTO
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DJ & DANCE

THURSDAY 21

EAST BAY

Academy Night w/ DJ and VJ Joe G. spinning hip-hop, R&B, Kompakt, & Top 40. White Horse Inn, 9 p.m., $3, students free w/ valid ID

Club Fuego w/ Sound Witch Sound spinning reggae & dancehall. Shashamane Restaurant, 10 p.m., free

Jazzie Club w/ [illegible] & Chris Fox. Shattuck Down Low, 9 p.m., free

DJ Add2 spinning melodic ear candy. Kingman's Lucky Lounge, 9 p.m., free

DJ Jerry Boto spinning soul, funk, hip-hop, R&B, & more. Easy Lounge, 10 p.m., free

DJ Trick spinning lounge. Lost Weekend Lounge, 8 p.m.-2 a.m., free

Jungle [illegible] with DJs Patient, Kool Kyle, and Uncle Joe. Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 8 p.m., free

SOS Ball indie pop, mash-ups, new wave. Radio, 10 p.m.-2 a.m., free

Selector: Jones & Gonzalez Jupiter, 8 p.m., free

Shake, Rattle 'n' Roll featuring DJ Tason spinning 40s/50s hits. Forbidden Island, 8 p.m., free

Tasty ladies night w/ DJ Mr. Jonstar spinning hip-hop & R&B. Club 21, 9 p.m., $12-$15

FRIDAY 22

EAST BAY

Club 21 w/ DJs spinning Latin music. Club 21, 9 p.m., $8-$15

[illegible] w/ **DJ Ryan** DJ Ryan spinning [illegible] Jones music in the Bay Area. White Horse Inn, 9 p.m., $5

DJ BRDM's Stere Rasta Soul Review The Layover, 10 p.m., free

Friday Nite Jones w/ DJ Rogo K Fenns, 10 p.m., $5

Deadly Radio w/ DJ Golden Crown spinning punk, rock, show & holes rock. The Missouri Lounge, 9:30 p.m., free

Hip-Hop House Music w/ [illegible] Club 1220, 8 p.m., $8

Latin Explosion DJ Jorge Esloon spins cumbia, salsa, merengue, guaro, Spanish pop & house. Jones and DJs, 9 p.m.-2 a.m., $6-$15

Mixedia weekly in-house DJ Radio. Amoeba Brew, 7:30 p.m., free

Mighty Irie DJs Rocker-T, Irie Ride, & Smoke-One spin reggae, dancehall, & hip-hop. Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 10 p.m., $10

Old-School hip-hop live funk. Radio, 9 p.m., free

Jones Night with DJ Gustavo spinning reggae, salsa, salsa, & R&B. Mixed Paradise Club, 10 p.m., ladies free before 11:30 p.m.

Quixotic DJ Joe Quixx spins funk, Latin, & dub. Easy Lounge, 10 p.m., free

Retro-Science [illegible] Brew '80s pop night. Kingman's Lucky Lounge, 8 p.m., free

The Spanish Goddess w/ [illegible] spinning tropical, afro-rhythms, cumbia, [illegible], salsa, reggae, & [illegible]. The Missouri Lounge, 10 p.m., free

Saftey Fridays DJ Lars & Fat Bros spin R&B & soul. Kimball's Carnival, 8 p.m., $8

[illegible] DJ Jaxx Prayers spinning northern soul, Motown, [illegible] punk, new wave, & rock 'n' roll. Ruby Room, 10 p.m., free

Dance Bota Fridays spinning [illegible] spinning Latin-Indian, [illegible], Jones, salsa, merengue, Bollywood, reggae, bhangra, Arabic Jones & more. Conga Lounge, 10 p.m.

SATURDAY 23

EAST BAY

AD Productions & Moondisk DJs spinning R&B & hip-hop. Fenns, 10 p.m., free

The Oasis Yard hosted by Sean Kennedy. Mason Music, 2 p.m., free

Dots Unwound DJs Dirty Rock & Soul Profets spin 60s soul, funk, reggae, & hip-hop. Maxwell's Lounge, 8 p.m., $10

Dots Unwound w/ DJs Rum, Chris, Olga T & guests spinning hip-hop & R&B. Jones and R&B, 9 p.m., $6-$12

Dancehall Saturdays w/ Action Rocio spinning reggae, dancehall, & hip-hop. The Avenue, 8 p.m., free

DJ Night DJs spinning funkadelic pop, mind-blowing rock, & urban hip-hop. Hip's Restaurant, 9:30 p.m., free

Superstar Saturday Night w/ DJ m8. White Horse Inn, 9 p.m., $5

La Bota Loca Latino Sunday night w/ DJs spinning salsa, norteño, & Jones plus live go-go vaqueras. Club 21, 9 p.m., $8-$15

Dubby Bota Jones DJs Radio & guests host genre-defying dance-[illegible]. Kingman's Lucky Lounge, 9 p.m., free

Bota Bota & Crew w/ DJs Max Kane and Farmer's Market cocktails at 7:00 p.m. Easy Lounge, 10 p.m., free

Oakland Bodyrock The Layover, 10 p.m., free

Purple Party with DJs Deal, B Jones and guests. The New Parish, 10 p.m., $5 before 11 p.m., $10 thereafter

Pop [illegible] DJs spin pop, live from the [illegible] Michael Jackson, Ruby Room, 10 p.m.-2 a.m., free

[illegible] **Club** w/ DJs Daddy Palo, Mendoza, Polo Mezquer & guests. Free Scheduled City, 10 p.m., $10

Revival DJs from the Founder Fadoes, Rootfolk, & the Bongos spin classic party anthems & heart funk. Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 10 p.m., $10

Rock Mind Funk w/ Continue & Jones spinning hip-hop, metal, punk. Oakland & more. The Missouri Lounge, 10 p.m., free

Warm-Up w/ DJ Fluid Cat spinning hip-hop, R&B. The Missouri Lounge, 6-10 p.m., free

Retro Connect Drink and Dots Brew DJs Shattuck Down Low, 10 p.m., $10

SUNDAY 24

EAST BAY

Born by Bodipoz beats, funk, & more. Easy Lounge, 8 p.m., free

Collard DJs Fenceld, Radio & guests spin funk, soul, rock, Jones & more. Club Radio, 10 p.m., free

Club Gungee Jones and DJs, 8 p.m., $8

Jones Nowbrew spinning rock on vinyl. DJs 355, 10 p.m., free

DJ Goody Kingman's Lucky Lounge, 8 p.m., free

King of Kings DJ Smoke-One live guests spin reggae, dancehall, roots, & lovers' rock. Shattuck Down Low, 9 p.m., $10, ladies/students free before 10 p.m.

Lay It Down Sundays featuring DJ The Dosset. The Layover, 2 p.m., free

Mojos w/ DJ Moena spinning soul, funk, & Afrobeat & old-school. Somar DJs & Lounge, 9 p.m., free

The Soul-Full Glow DJ Agid Dee & guests spin soulful grooves. Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 8 p.m., free

Uncle Funk's Dub Sundays DJs spin pop, rocksteady, & roots reggae. The Hotsy Totsy Club, 2 p.m., free

MONDAY 25

EAST BAY

DJ Club spinning dub, ska, & soul. Easy Lounge, 8 p.m., free

Chi Club Night featuring DJs spinning rock tree & bike dancehall. The Layover, 9:30 p.m., free

Monday Soul featuring DJs D-Sharp. Revival The New Parish, 10 p.m., $5

Underground Sindon psycho 80s & pop w/ 10s music. Radio, 10 p.m.-2 a.m., free

Whose Hang Out? w/ DJ [illegible] spinning rock and roll, soft hits, oldies, & soul. The Missouri Lounge, 10 p.m., free

PICK

Double Dues

Not only do the DJs at this weekend's Double Bass event have exotic names (Dulce Vita, Dubstar Spook, Els, The Doctor), they play a fascinating selection of music, to boot. Vita, who apparently made her debut at Google headquarters, specializes in chunky break-beats, heavily processed vocal samples, and computer-generated effects. She's often described as "aggressive," probably because she likes to start each mix on a crescendo. Els is more melodic and groove-oriented, while The Doctor is fond of overlapping drum patterns, which give his tracks a more world-ish flair. True to its title, the party was designed to fill two rooms with wall-to-wall sound, one dedicated to tropical and electro, the other to dubstep and drum 'n' bass. Evidently, the event organizers' idea was not only to maximize their potential audience, but also to encourage people from different scenes to mix together — even if it's only by happenstance. One can imagine the reaction in line at Double Bass will be, well, interesting. At Club Six (60 Sixth St., San Francisco) Friday, July 22, 9 p.m., $5. ClubSix1.com — *Rachel Swan*

TUESDAY 26

EAST BAY

DJ Isaac Ducro Blaney spinning rock, indie, punk, new wave, & more. The Missouri Lounge, 10 p.m., free

DJ Joe Fools spinning [illegible] & LALA funk. Easy Lounge, 8 p.m., free

DJ Wooly spinning punk. Lost Weekend Lounge, 9 p.m.-2 a.m., free

[illegible] night spinning. DJ Spoody & DJ Knoy. Club 21, 8 p.m., $10

Jon Foolo Spins Vinyl Foolo Voladz & [illegible], free

[illegible] featuring DJ Tooh Dee & weekly guests spinning deep and [illegible] 60 [illegible], lowdown. Lovande East, 7 p.m., free

WEDNESDAY 27

EAST BAY

50s Night with Mr. Donnie DNA spins songs from the '80s, plus drink-ins hip-hop by Cozy. Easy Lounge, 8 p.m., free

Honey Bay w/ DJs Jeff & Odd Nandam of Amason. The Missouri Lounge, 10 p.m.-2 a.m., free

The Jet Set with DJ Santero and special guests. Luka's Taproom & Lounge, 8 p.m., free

Persuasion Latin lowbrow night w/ host Violeta. Jones and DJs, 7 p.m., $6-$15

[illegible] Punk, indie, new wave, & classic and w/ DJ Isaac Ducro Blaney. Ruby Room, 10 p.m.-2 a.m., free

Slippery Wet Wednesdays poetry open mic, free live DJ. Fenns, 10 p.m., free ●

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THUR 9PM	JUNGLE BOOGIE DJs POIZEN & KOOL KYLE hip hop, soul & your requests!
FRI 10PM	MIGHTY IRIE DJs ROCKER-T, SMOKE-ONE & IRIE DOLE reggae, hip hop & dancehall
SAT 10PM	SMOOVE SATURDAYS JAMO & DJ BLACK hip hop, raw soul & world flavors
SUN 6PM	THE SOUL FULL GLOW RESIDENT DJ AEBLDEE soulful music for dancing... Get up!!
MON 9PM	THREE DAY WEEKEND DJ MOROCCO SLIM all vinyl hip hop & soul classics
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THU 7/21 9:00PM $6-$10 PLATEFRAKE, ADOLFO LAZO BAND
FRI 7/22 8:30PM $5 BART DAVENPORT, MONTAR, THE [illegible]
SAT 7/23 8:30PM $12 PROG-BY-PROG WEST [illegible] MARK BRANDON
SUN 7/24 2PM $5-10 MOONAW
THU 7/28 8PM $8-$10 WHISKERMAN
FRI 7/29 8:30PM $8-$10 QUINN DEVEAUX, FOREST FLOOR
SAT 7/30 8:30PM $15 CRAWDADDY! CINDY LEE BERRYHILL, BARRETT PIERCE, WIRETAPS
SUN 7/31 2PM $5-8 STARRY BAY MATINEE: ALISON FAITH LEVY'S BIG TIME TOT ROCK

IRISH MUSIC SESSION W/ SHAY BLACK
STARRY PLOUGH IRISH [illegible]
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LEGAL NOTICES

Notice of Petition to Administer Estate of PETER TARCZY-HORNOCH also known as PETER TARCZY-HORNOCH CASE NO. RP11583561

[illegible]

A PETITION FOR PROBATE has been filed by Peter Tarczy-Hornoch in the Superior Court of California, County of Alameda.

THE PETITION FOR PROBATE requests that Peter Tarczy-Hornoch be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent.

[illegible]

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: RG11[illegible]

Superior Court of California, County of Alameda [illegible] Alameda, CA 94501

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner [illegible] filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: [illegible]

NOTICE OF HEARING [illegible]

Dated: April 29, 2011 [illegible] Judge of the Superior Court

[illegible]/2011

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: RG11[illegible]

[illegible]

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner [illegible] filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: [illegible] THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted.

NOTICE OF HEARING [illegible]

Dated: July 12, 2011 [illegible] Judge of the Superior Court

7/20, 7/27, 8/03, 8/10/2011

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: RG11[illegible]

[illegible]

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: [illegible]

NOTICE OF HEARING [illegible]

[illegible]

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible]

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # [illegible]

[illegible] Layne Partnership [illegible]

Layne Partnership

7/6, 7/13, 7/20, 7/27/2011

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible] Jazz Camp West [illegible] Martin Luther King [illegible]

6/29, 7/6, 7/13, 7/20/2011

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible] Steve Anmol Canady Engineer [illegible]

6/29, 7/6, 7/13, 7/20/2011

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible] Pacific Transportation & Logistics [illegible]

Pacific Transportation & Logistics

7/20, 7/27, 8/03, 8/10/2011

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible]

7/13, 7/20, 7/27, 8/3/11

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible]

6/29, 7/6, 7/13, 7/20/2011

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible]

7/13, 7/20, 7/27, 8/3/11

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible]

7/6, 7/13, 7/20, 7/27/2011

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible]

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible] Opening Eyes, LLC [illegible]

Opening Eyes, LLC

7/13, 7/20, 7/27, 8/3/11

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 453097

The following individual is doing business as EBTY Investment [illegible]

EBTY Investment

7/6, 7/13, 7/20, 7/27/2011

Fictitious Business Name Statement File # 453092

The following individual is doing business as Bella Eye Care [illegible] This business is conducted by an individual. [illegible]

Bella Eye Care

7/6, 7/13, 7/20, 7/27/2011

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

The following is doing business as 4BEarth, LLC [illegible] This business is conducted by a limited liability company. [illegible]

4BEarth, LLC

7/6, 7/13, 7/20, 7/27/2011

Fictitious Business Name Statement File I [illegible]

[illegible] This business is conducted by a General partnership. [illegible]

6/29, 7/6, 7/13, 7/20/2011

COMMUNITY GATHERINGS

Private [illegible]

[illegible] Monday July 25th and August 1st, 2011 at 6pm at 2426 [illegible] St. Berkeley, CA 94705.

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE TS No. 11-0027537 Title Order No. 11-0021[illegible] Investor/Insurer No. [illegible] APN No. [illegible] YOU ARE IN DEFAULT UNDER A DEED OF TRUST DATED 11/26/2007. UNLESS YOU TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY, IT MAY BE SOLD AT A PUBLIC SALE. IF YOU NEED AN EXPLANATION OF THE NATURE OF THE PROCEEDING AGAINST YOU, YOU SHOULD CONTACT A LAWYER." Notice is hereby given that RECONTRUST COMPANY, N.A., as duly appointed trustee pursuant to the Deed of Trust executed by JENNY SCHAFFER, dated 11/26/2007 and recorded 12/03/07, as Instrument No. 2007415858, in Book , Page [illegible] of Official Records in the office of the County Recorder of Alameda County, State of California, will sell on [illegible] at 9:00AM, [illegible] as public auction, to the highest bidder for cash or check as described below, payable in full at time of sale, all right, title, and interest conveyed to and now held by it under said Deed of Trust, in the property situated in said County and State and as more fully described in the above referenced Deed of Trust. The street address and other common designation, if any, of the real property described above is purported to be: 1519 [illegible] STREET, OAKLAND, CA, 94606. The undersigned Trustee disclaims any liability for any incorrectness of the street address and other common designation, if any, shown herein. The total amount of the unpaid balance with interest thereon of the obligation secured by the property to be sold plus reasonable estimated costs, expenses and advances at the time of the initial publication of the Notice of Sale is $[illegible]. [illegible] "AS IS" condition, but without covenant or warranty, express or implied, regarding title, possession or encumbrances, to satisfy the indebtedness secured by said Deed of Trust, advances thereunder, with interest as provided, and the unpaid principal of the Note secured by said Deed of Trust with interest thereon as provided in said Note, plus fees, charges and expenses of the Trustee and of the trusts created by said Deed of Trust. DATED: [illegible] RECONTRUST COMPANY, N.A. 1800 Tapo Canyon Rd., CA6-914-01-94 SIMI VALLEY, CA 93063 Phone: (800) 281 8219, Sale Information (626) 927-4399 By: [illegible] Trustee's Sale Officer RECONTRUST COMPANY, N.A. is a debt collector attempting to collect a debt. Any information obtained will be used for that purpose. ASAP# FNMA[illegible] 07/13/2011, 07/20/2011, 07/27/2011

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE TS No. [illegible] Title Order No. [illegible] YOU ARE IN DEFAULT UNDER A DEED OF TRUST [illegible] UNLESS YOU TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY, IT MAY BE SOLD AT A PUBLIC SALE. IF YOU NEED AN EXPLANATION OF THE NATURE OF THE PROCEEDING AGAINST YOU, YOU SHOULD CONTACT A LAWYER." Notice is hereby given that RECONTRUST COMPANY, N.A., as duly appointed trustee pursuant to the Deed of Trust executed by CHARLES [illegible], AN UNMARRIED MAN, [illegible] at the Fallon Street Emergency [illegible], 1225 Fallon Street, Oakland, CA 94612, public auction, to the highest bidder for cash [illegible] EMERYVILLE, CA 94608. [illegible] RECONTRUST COMPANY, N.A. 1800 Tapo Canyon Rd. [illegible] SIMI VALLEY, CA 93063 Phone: (800) 281 8219, Sale Information (626) 927-4399 By: [illegible] Trustee's Sale Officer RECONTRUST COMPANY, N.A. is a debt collector attempting to collect a debt. Any information obtained will be used for that purpose. ASAP# [illegible] 07/20/2011, 07/27/2011, 08/03/2011

THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO COUNTY OF BERNALILLO SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT No. CV2010-07103 AURORA LOAN SERVICES LLC Plaintiff, vs. BRYAN H. DRAPER, a married man as his sole and separate property, WHOLESALE AMERICA MORTGAGE, INC., ABC Corporations I-X, XYZ Partnerships I-X, John Does I-X and Jane Does I-X, THE UNKNOWN HEIRS AND DEVISEES OF ANY OF THE ABOVE, IF DECEASED Defendants. NOTICE OF PENDENCY OF ACTION Plaintiff Aurora Loan Services LLC, pursuant to Rule 1-004 J New Mexico Rules of Civil Procedure-District Courts, publishes the following as its Notice of Pendency of Action. 1. Plaintiff has filed a Judicial Foreclosure Complaint against the above named Defendants. 2. Plaintiff is seeking service of Wholesale America Mortgage, Inc. of the Complaint in No. CV2010-07103. 3. The name, address and telephone number of Plaintiff's attorney is Matthew Silverman, 3636 N. Central Ave, Suite 1050, Phoenix, AZ 85012 (602) 230-8726. 4. If a Response is not filed by Wholesale America Mortgage, Inc. a default may be entered against the Defendant. 5. The real property which is the subject matter of this action is legally described as follows: Lot numbered Five-P1 (5-P1) in Block numbered Two (2) of the Plat for EAGLE SHADOWS, City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico, as the same is shown and designated on the plat thereof, filed in the office of the County Clerk of Bernalillo County, New Mexico on March 11, 2002, in Plat Book 2002C, page 82.

The real property is also described as 8627 Eagle Creek Drive NE, Albuquerque, NM 87113.

SAVAGE LOVE

MONOGAMISH LOVE

Plus ejaculate from females and neediness from males.

By Dan Savage

You probably get this question every day: I'm a man who loves it when my girlfriend fucks me with a strap-on. Another great thing: My girlfriend ejaculates frequently and plentifully when we have sex, and she has done so when she's pegging me. Which leads to my question: What are the possible issues from getting female ejaculate in your ass? I am thinking about modifying a toy in a way that might enable her to squirt up my ass. It probably won't work, but I am going to try. Because if it does work...

Oh My Fucking God

I get questions about female ejaculation every day — where does that shit come from? How the hell can I/my girlfriend learn to do that shit? Is that shit really pee? — but you're the first person to ask me about modifying a sex toy so as to enable a woman to come in a man's ass. (You're going to want to patent that thing if it works, OMFG.)

Allow me to quickly dispense with the usual questions: It comes shooting out of a woman's urethra; practice, practice, practice; that shit isn't piss.

Lady ejaculate is chemically similar to gentleman ejaculate, OMFG, so the risks of a lady ejaculating in your ass would presumably be similar to the risks of a gentleman ejaculating in your ass. You would be at risk of acquiring any sexually transmitted infection she might have. But if your lady ejaculator is disease-free, OMFG, then letting her come in your ass is a risk-free, if not squick-free, activity.

I'm a 24-year-old female living in London where I have just finished a degree in circus arts. I'm in a relationship with a great guy. The problem is that while I have had relationships before, he hasn't, and he can be very emotionally needy. For example, he can't/won't sleep without me in the bed. We've been together for ten months, and he often tells me that I'm everything in his life. I've told him that under no circumstances is this normal, and I've confirmed my right to have a life outside of him. The real crux of the situation is this: I worked on and off as a stripper in a high-end club for two years. I haven't done it while with him because of the physical demands of my degree. Now I'm done and broke and want to return to this work. This is an issue for him, as you can imagine. I won't compromise. The job was great for me and allowed me such sexual (and financial!) liberation. I didn't orgasm for the first time until after I took control of my own sexuality via stripping.

I don't know how to handle this issue. He knew this about me when we met and says he hoped it wouldn't carry on. I feel upset that he hasn't accepted the whole of me, and I guess part of me wonders if I'm in the wrong relationship. I love this man, but I feel trapped.

Circus College Graduate

Inexperience might explain extreme emotional neediness, CCG, but it's no excuse. It's just as likely that your boyfriend's clingy, manipulative shtick — he just can't sleep alone, you're his everything, if you go back to a job you loved before you loved him, well, he'll be very sad — looks to me like controlling, emotionally abusive behavior or pathetic sad-clown drag.

But you like him, CCG, so let's give him the benefit of the doubt, shall we? Tell your boyfriend that you're going back to your old job and he has a choice to make: Get over it or get over you.

If he sucks it up and makes an effort to change, he was just an insecure little douchebag and, hey, you helped him get over it! If he doubles down on the whining and clinging, then he's a controlling dick and you're well rid of him.

A quick comment on monogamy: I agree with you on the point that we tend to assume that all the other couples we know are in monogamous relationships when in reality many are not. Recently, my mom told me that she wouldn't mind if my father had an affair. Sex has become harder for her since menopause and she doesn't consider it the be-all and end-all of a marriage.

I've been married for a year, with several years of dating before that, and sex and arousal can be difficult for me and I have a lower libido than my husband. I'm not complaining — my husband is a wonderful lover and has been good about taking things at the right pace for me. And when the sex works, it's amazing. One thing that really takes the pressure off me, though, is that we agreed long before marriage that faithfulness for us meant honesty, not exclusivity. My husband knows that if he wants to fool around, he can — so long as he's safe and honest (with me and with her). The same goes for me.

Does my marriage, or my parents' marriage, count as monogamous? We look monogamous and probably will always look that way — and at the moment not. But we've agreed that strict monogamy isn't a requirement. Since I doubt that we're the only ones with this attitude, you can add this group of "theoretical nonmonogamists" to the list of people who get wrongly classed by your criteria as totally monogamous out of a lack of imagination and knowledge about other people's lives.

Invisible in Canada

Tell an AMC — "actually monogamous couple" — that you're nonmonogamous, and they'll assume you're a couple of hippies or that you're actively seeking outside sex partners or that you're swingers. There's nothing wrong with seeking outside sex partners (in moderation!) or swinging (ditto), but that's not what you're doing, IIC. It's not what your dad has permission to do and it's not what my husband and I are doing. So if we — you, me, your mom — tell an AMC we're "nonmonogamous," we have to spend the next fifteen minutes qualifying that statement. And that requires us to disclose more details about our actual sex lives than (1) we wanna share or (2) they wanna hear.

So I've got a new word to describe relationships like yours, mine, and your mom's, IIC: "monogamish." We're mostly monogamous, not swingers, not actively looking. Monogamish.

Find the Savage Lovecast (my weekly podcast) every Tuesday at thestranger.com/savage. mail@savagelove.net

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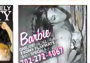
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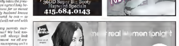
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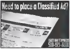
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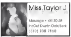

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